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General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Friday, 25 September 2009, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki ..... (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Let me begin by extending our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Your election to this high office is a fitting and eloquent tribute to the personal and diplomatic qualities that we have witnessed in you over the years. We are indeed proud of the honour that has been bestowed upon the African continent by your election. We are confident that under your wise stewardship we will make pleasing progress on the important agenda before us.

In the same vein, Mr. President, I wish to commend your predecessor, the President at the sixty-third session, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for having brought his experience and wisdom to bear upon the various meetings and conferences that he presided over during the last year. He brought integrity, transparency and credibility to the deliberations of the General Assembly. Indeed, we share his assertion that the "G-192" — that is, the General Assembly — being the most representative body of the United Nations, is the best forum in which to tackle global issues, which include the current financial and economic crises. We commend him for standing up for what is right and for upholding the right of each Member State, no matter how small, to be heard.

Over the years, my delegation has underlined the need for the United Nations and other international bodies to truly serve the collective interest of all Member States. Our unchanging conviction is that all international institutions should abide by the universal principles that underlie the multilateral processes of decision-making, particularly, the principle of equality among States and the right to development. It is in this context that we welcome the appropriate, indeed, timely, theme of this session, namely, effective global responses to global crises, and strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations. It is our hope that we will have a candid and holistic debate on the global responses to the crises that currently affect our world.

Zimbabwe supports the revitalization of the General Assembly in order to make it more effective and thus enable it to fulfil its mandate. As the pre-eminent deliberative and policymaking body of the United Nations, the Assembly should play a more active role in mobilizing action against such challenges

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today as the maintenance of peace and security, the financial and economic crises, economic and social development and climate change.

Accordingly, the encroachment of other United Nations organs on the work of the General Assembly is of great concern to us. We therefore reiterate that any process of revitalization should strengthen the principle of the accountability of all principal and subsidiary organs of the United Nations to the Assembly.

It is our hope that the current negotiations on the reform of the Security Council will break the deadlock that for some time now has prevented us from making progress in an area of strategic interest to Africa. The reform of the Council is not only desirable but imperative if it is to ensure the successful implementation of its global mandate to maintain international peace and security on behalf of all Member States.

The fact that Africa, a major geographical region, remains underrepresented and without a permanent seat on the Security Council is not only a serious and antiquated anomaly whose time for address is overdue. It is also clearly an untenable violation of the principle and practice of democracy in international relations. The reform of the Security Council should urgently take full notice of the African position, which demands two permanent seats, with complete veto power — as long as the veto lasts — plus two additional non-permanent seats.

The United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, held in June 2009, rightfully positioned the Organization at the centre of efforts to deal with the global financial and economic crisis. The devastating effect of the current global crisis has clearly exposed the folly of leaving the management of the global economy in the hands of a few self-appointed countries and groupings.

My delegation, therefore, fully supports the setting up of a follow-up working group under the aegis of the General Assembly. It is urgent and critical that the working group reach an early agreement on immediate policy actions to be taken by the international community in support of developing countries, which have suffered the most as a result of this global financial meltdown. Such actions should include the development of a global stimulus plan to respond to the crisis and issues related to it.

Those measures will not achieve the desired objectives unless accompanied by a comprehensive reform of the Bretton Woods institutions. Such reforms would, inter alia, include representation of sub-Saharan Africa on the Executive Boards of these institutions. We are glad that our unequivocal call for their reform is beginning to bear fruit. We welcome the recent decision by the World Bank to establish three seats for Africa on its Executive Board. We are similarly pleased that, earlier this month, the International Monetary Fund finalized the re-allocation of special drawing rights on the basis of the $250 billion pledged by the Group of 20 at its meeting in April 2009. Regrettably, only a mere $18 billion of this money was allocated to low-income countries, while the developed countries — which caused the crisis, after all — got the lion's share.

The need to ensure global food security has been raised and restated at many international forums. We reiterate our call for an urgent and substantial increase in investment in agriculture in developing countries. It is critical that provisions of agricultural inputs — seeds, fertilizers and chemicals — be put in place for small-scale farmers, particularly women.

To achieve this, we need to channel more support towards agriculture, which has dwindled over the last few decades. In addition, we call upon developed countries to remove or reduce their agricultural subsidies and to open up their markets to agricultural products from developing countries.

In the area of health, efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality and to combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis still fall short of targets despite the commitments made at national and international levels. Over the last few years, Zimbabwe has made great strides in the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic, our limited resources notwithstanding. The country has witnessed a drop in the adult prevalence rate from 20 per cent in 2000 to 11 per cent this year.

However, we still face a major challenge in increasing the availability of affordable antiretroviral drugs. We therefore continue to urge the international community, in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, to assist in increasing access to affordable essential drugs, particularly for people in Africa. People living with HIV and AIDS expect delivery on the commitments we have made.

For sub-Saharan Africa, malaria presents yet another still-formidable challenge. The commitment of the international community and national Governments therefore needs to be strengthened to eradicate the scourge of malaria in our part of the world.

We warmly welcome the renewed enthusiasm on the part of Russia and the United States to pursue actions to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, and we urge other nuclear-armed States to do the same. In this regard, Zimbabwe is honoured to have chaired, in May of this year, the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and takes this opportunity to thank all members for their support. We are hopeful that, having secured agreement on the Conference agenda, members will produce a renewed commitment to the three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

I would now like to turn to developments in my country. Since its formation in February this year, the Inclusive Government in Zimbabwe has demonstrated a conviction and unity of purpose and an unwavering commitment to chart a new vision for the country and to improve the lives of the people in peace and harmony. In the Global Political Agreement, we have defined our priorities as the maintenance of conditions of peace and stability, economic recovery, development, promotion of human rights and improvement of the condition of women and children.

Regrettably, while countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region have made huge sacrifices and given Zimbabwe financial and other support at a time when they too are reeling from the effects of the global economic crisis, the Western countries — in particular the United States and the European Union, who imposed illegal sanctions on Zimbabwe — have, to our surprise, and that of SADC and the rest of Africa, refused to remove the sanctions. We wonder what their motives are, and we ask what they would want to see us do. Indeed, some Western countries are working strenuously to divide the parties in the Inclusive Government. If they will not assist the Inclusive Government in rehabilitating our economy, could they please, please stop their filthy clandestine, divisive antics. Where stand their humanitarian principles, we ask, when their illegal sanctions are ruining the lives of our children?

We simply call for an immediate end to the coercive, illegal and unjustified 50-year economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which is estimated to have cost Cuba a total of some $96 billion so far. My delegation joins other countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that have repeatedly condemned the use of unilateral coercive measures as a flagrant violation of the norms of international law and international relations, especially as they govern relations between States under the United Nations Charter.

Let me conclude by reiterating the need for effective and comprehensive multilateralism to promote a global partnership for peace and development. The United Nations and other international organizations that carry the legitimacy of multilateralism should play a leading role in directing the course of events and developments, taking into account the interests of the majority of the Organization's members in an inclusive, peaceful, just, universal and democratic manner.

It is our hope that through our unity, solidarity, cooperation and commitment, the challenges facing the international community can be addressed. Let us rise to the occasion and demonstrate our political will and ability to work together for the good of humanity. Zimbabwe is willing and ready to play its part.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by the Honourable Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

The Honourable Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency The Honourable Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Stephen: I would like to offer my congratulations, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Allow me also to commend your predecessor, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his capable leadership during the sixty-third session. I assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the work of this important session.

The new millennium has been no stranger to crisis. We have seen how ideological extremism can foment turmoil and civil unrest in ways that do not respect international borders. We have also learned that financial instability can quickly propagate through global markets and cause chaos in the real economy. And we have been repeatedly reminded that we disrespect the natural environment at our peril.

The global challenges that we face today may sometimes shock us, but they should not surprise us. Most stem from problems that have been allowed to fester and grow for many years, if not decades. All are inextricably linked to the choices made by the international community regarding international commerce and development. The challenges of the new millennium are global in nature and therefore require a global response. Now, more than ever, we must revitalize our multilateral systems of governance in order to make them more responsive and more representative. Large countries tend to dominate international forums and drown out the rest of us.

In the case of climate change and small island States, I mean that quite literally. We must consider the impacts of our activities and institutions on the most vulnerable, so that large and small countries alike can enjoy the stability and security necessary for sustainable economic development. In this new millennium, even the mighty have been humbled. So what does that mean for a small island nation like Nauru? When giants stumble, it is usually the smallest that suffer the most serious injuries.

The international community must begin this process of renewal by reaffirming its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an initiative meant to alleviate the burdens of extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy, inequality and disease. After early success in the 1990s, progress towards the MDGs has slowed throughout the world.

In the Pacific, where nearly 40 per cent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, it has been no different. The reasons are not hard to identify. The Asian financial crisis was devastating for the economies in our region. The recent spike in food and energy prices has strained our limited financial resources. Now the global economic downturn threatens to depress our economies even further.

Additionally, the Pacific confronts a unique set of challenges in reaching our MDGs. Our remoteness makes it difficult to access world markets and greatly increases the cost of doing business. Our small size deprives us of the advantage of economies of scale, and our vulnerability to climate change places our hard-won economic and social progress in jeopardy. Perhaps the most vivid example of our situation is the price of a bag of rice. For most countries, the food crisis has eased as commodity prices have fallen but, in Nauru, the price of a bag of rice has increased by 80 per cent over the past year, hovering now above $60. The rest of the world pays less than $25.

The time has come for the international community to deliver on its promises and to dedicate 0.7 per cent of gross national income to helping developing countries meet their development goals. Past recessions have led to a steep drop in levels of official development assistance. There will be no hope of reaching our MDGs if that happens again.

It is vitally important for United Nations agencies to strengthen their engagement in the Pacific region. For the past four years, Nauru has called upon the United Nations to establish a presence on the ground by opening an office in our country. It is my fervent hope that the next time that I address this body I can announce that that commitment of the United Nations has been fulfilled.

The absence of the United Nations in the Pacific is reflected by the paucity of statistics collected in the region. Accurate indicators are necessary for tracking economic and social progress. It is critical for United Nations agencies and other international institutions to work more closely with our national Governments and with regional organizations so that accurate data is available for planning and policymaking.

The temptation to add layer upon layer of new programmes must be avoided. We must not forget the commitments made under the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of

Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Monterrey Consensus, the Paris Declaration and other international agreements. Too often, the United Nations and other development partners succeed in delivering many new reports, but fail to deliver tangible results. Action plans are no substitute for action. We must dispense with the excuse that helping poor countries develop is something that we cannot afford. That is simply not true. Quite the opposite: in a globalized world, leaving large portions of the world to languish in poverty is what we cannot afford.

The international community must also reform the world financial system so that all developing countries share equitably in global economic prosperity. The current economic crisis has revealed deep flaws in our international financial system. The overriding goals of those reforms should be to facilitate growth in developing nations and to increase their resilience to abrupt economic fluctuations and the fickle flow of capital.

While Nauru does not have a mature financial sector, shocks to the international system can be devastating to our local economy and dry up vital development assistance. To be effective, development assistance needs to be reliable. That is not possible without a stable and transparent financial system.

Lastly, the international community must next take swift steps to mitigate climate change, starting with a bold agreement in Copenhagen. Climate change presents the greatest threat for my country and many other small island developing States. Scientists warn that, within our children's lifetime, sea levels may rise by a metre or more. That would wipe out low-lying coastal areas, and many Pacific islands would be a distant memory.

However, we do not need to wait for that catastrophic scenario to see the impacts of climate change. We live with them every day. Flooding and inundation are already eroding our shores and contaminating our water supply. Higher water temperatures and ocean acidification are damaging the marine ecosystems that we depend on for food and our economic livelihood. We pray that malaria does not find its way to our doorstep.

I applaud the commitment of the Secretary-General to addressing that issue and his efforts to build consensus among world leaders this week at the high-level Summit on Climate Change. From Asia to Africa and the Arctic, he has visited affected regions to observe the effects of climate change first hand, but not the Pacific, one of the most vulnerable regions in the world.

When the Secretary-General glances out the window of his aircraft while travelling between Asia and the Americas, I would ask that he remember that, in the vast expanse of water below, there is a whole region of people living on small islands who are already grappling with the consequences of climate change. I encourage that his next trip be to the nations of the Pacific before they disappear.

The science tells us that we must reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million or less in order to avoid the most dire climate change scenarios. However, most developed countries have proposed emissions targets that would result in concentrations far higher.

That is not acceptable policy when human lives are at stake. If a doctor prescribes medicine to treat a serious illness, do we only give the patient half of what is needed? If an engineer says eight columns are necessary to support a building, would any responsible person recommend that we use only four? Then why are the most vulnerable countries asked to accept proposals that would surely lead to our extinction? That is not good enough when the lives of real people from real places are being threatened.

Developed countries must also provide the financial, technical and human resources necessary for us to address a problem that was not of our own making. Nauru joins the Alliance of Small Island States in calling for developed countries to provide the equivalent of 1 per cent of their gross domestic product for urgent adaptation and mitigation efforts in developing countries. That must be in addition to their current commitments for development assistance.

Climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation from every member of the international community. Taiwan, as one of the world's 20 largest economies, can contribute in many ways and should be invited to play a larger role in the United Nations system, particularly in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. Taiwan has much to offer to vulnerable countries, especially in adaptation measures, technology transfer and financing.

Climate change is an imminent threat to international security. It is therefore vital that the Security Council be seized of the issue and closely monitor new developments. Special attention must be paid to the most vulnerable countries, including the small island developing States and least developed countries, and also to vulnerable groups within countries, including women and children, indigenous people and the poor.

The challenges of the new millennium can be overcome only through multilateral cooperation and a revitalized United Nations system. It is necessary for the Security Council to be more representative in both the permanent and non-permanent categories to reflect current geopolitical realities, which is why Japan, India, Germany and Brazil should be made permanent members. I also call upon the General Assembly, as the world's most representative governance body, to accept Taiwan's meaningful participation in its specialized agencies and other world forums.

We have seen the power of multilateral cooperation around the world and close to home. My country was at the brink of economic collapse at the beginning of this decade. In cooperation with Pacific Islands Forum member Governments, my country outlined a number of key governance and development priorities in the Pacific Regional Assistance for Nauru (PRAN) programme. It included a re-evaluation of fiscal policies and objectives, review of our Constitution, and reforms for our education and health sectors. I am proud that in just four years we have reached the goals laid out in PRAN, so much so that at the fortieth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting, held in Cairns, Australia just last month, leaders agreed that Nauru had emerged from the crisis phase and was on the path to sustainable economic recovery and development, and that PRAN was no longer required.

PRAN was an excellent example of how country-focused development aid can quickly lift a nation out of crisis and back onto the path towards sustainable development. PRAN was successful because it identified concrete objectives and was backed by sufficient funds. Future programmes in the region should likewise bring tangible benefits and be free from political influence.

Here I must acknowledge and express Nauru's deepest appreciation to Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Japan and Forum island countries, our own regional organizations and others for their unwavering funding and other forms of support to PRAN. The people of Nauru will always remember their generosity during our time of need.

We are also grateful to the United Nations Democracy Fund. With its assistance, Nauru recently adopted a number of important constitutional amendments that will enhance good governance and bring increased stability and responsiveness to my Government.

One of the founding fathers of the United Nations once said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little". President Roosevelt passed away before the inaugural session of the General Assembly, but those of us here today have the responsibility to see that his spirit lives on.

The United Nations system of multilateral governance was born out of a time of great crisis and it ushered in over half a century of peace and prosperity. However, the benefits were not shared equally, and two thirds of humanity was largely left behind. The time has come to take up the project begun 64 years ago so that future prosperity can be shared by all, including the smallest and most vulnerable. The United Nations continues to be our best hope for creating a fairer and more just world.

God bless the Republic of Nauru, and God bless the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United

Nations His Excellency Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Toribiong: I am speaking for the first time as Head of State. However, in 1977 I appeared with my country's delegation before the Trusteeship Council, seeking independence. In 1994, the trusteeship ended and we took our place as a Member of the United Nations. Our independence is testament to the success of the International Trusteeship System, for which we are grateful. The legacy of our experience is a Constitution that incorporates the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: freedom, democracy, equal protection and the rule of law.

We thank the permanent members of the Security Council, which recognized our sovereignty: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. The United States was our Administering Authority, and we express our deep appreciation to it for becoming our close partner under the Compact of Free Association, a relationship we cherish and one that we hope will endure.

As a new and young Member, Palau has shouldered its responsibilities in the community of nations, including the deployment of peacekeepers to Darfur, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands. When signing international conventions and meeting our counter-terrorism obligations, as set forth by the Security Council, we remember and honour the legacy of the United Nations.

While our political progress has been satisfactory since independence, I must report to you that we are now confronted with several looming threats to our continued peaceful way of life, and indeed to our very existence. Climate change, environmental degradation and the world financial crisis are challenges that we will only be able to overcome if we work with the international community.

We associate ourselves with the statements of concern on climate change which we heard in this Hall earlier this week. We applaud the commitments made and note that we must use our best efforts to stop this slow-moving tsunami that threatens to engulf us. To this end, Palau and our neighbours in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands have adopted a joint policy, known as Green Energy Micronesia (GEM) to move to renewable energy as a pillar of our collective energy security. Furthermore, Palau has signed the Statute of the International Renewable Energy Agency, and we look forward to the exciting work that will emanate from the United Arab Emirates. We are hopeful that the combined efforts of all our nations will lead to a fruitful outcome in Copenhagen.

We note in particular the statement of the new Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Yukio Hatoyama. Japan's vision and commitment to save our planet are inspiring. This is one of the many reasons we support a permanent seat for Japan on the Security Council.

We reiterate that climate change is indeed a cross-cutting issue and that all aspects of it, especially the security impact of climate change, need to be examined. This is why Palau and the Pacific Small Island Developing States initiated General Assembly resolution 63/281, on "Climate change and its possible security implications". We look forward to meaningful action by the Security Council on that resolution.

Palauans have lived throughout history in symbiosis with the sea. Now, though, the sea, which has long been the source of our sustenance, is simultaneously rising in rage to destroy us and becoming barren. This fury was caused by abuses by humankind, and we therefore must take every necessary action to allow the oceans to heal themselves. In days gone by, the traditional chiefs of Palau would declare a *bul* — a moratorium to protect a resource that had become scarce. This traditional concept, now popularly known as conservation, shows the way for us to move forward. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed".

This is why the world must declare a *bul* on destructive fishing practices like deep-sea bottom trawling, unsustainable harvesting of shark for their fins and overexploitation of tuna stocks. The odious fishing practice of bottom trawling, where a weighted net is dragged along the sea floor, crushing nearly everything in its path, is contributing to the rapid loss of a critical ecosystem, our coral reefs. We have outlawed deep-sea bottom trawling in Palau, but, no matter what we do in our own waters, there must be an international solution. For several years, we, along with our Pacific neighbours, have advocated a

moratorium on this practice. The sustainable fisheries resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 (resolution 62/177) urged nations and regional fishery management organizations to stop trawling in sensitive areas by 2009. We have waited for compliance, which has not come, and we now renew our call for a worldwide moratorium on this practice.

An equally destructive fishing practice is shark-finning. We have banned it in Palau and call upon the world to address this issue in order to save sharks from extinction. The physical strength and beauty of sharks are a natural barometer of the health of our oceans. Therefore, I declare today that Palau will become the world's first national shark sanctuary, ending all commercial shark fishing in our waters and giving a sanctuary for sharks to live and reproduce unmolested in our 237,000 square miles of ocean. We call upon all nations to join us. The need to save sharks and our environment far outweighs the need to enjoy a bowl of shark's fin soup.

It is anomalous that Palau is experiencing economic difficulty while it sits in the middle of the richest fishing grounds in the world, the Pacific Ocean. We can no longer stand by while foreign vessels illicitly come to our waters to take our greatest resource, our tuna stocks, without regard for their conservation and without regard for adequate compensation to the island States that own the fishing grounds and rely on this resource. Palau believes that the best model for a regional effort to conserve our tuna resources and maximize the benefits to us is the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). I will therefore work for the establishment of OTEC, the Organization of Tuna Exporting Countries, and I now call on our friends in OPEC to come forward and help us to understand and obtain fair value from our threatened resource and to make tuna fishing sustainable.

I come now to the economic crisis that my country is facing. As a developing nation, we are grateful for the grants provided by our allies and partners to advance our development. They have been helpful.

Mr. Martinez Bonilla (El Salvador) Vice-President, took the Chair.

But we must acknowledge that outright grants do not always create meaningful employment. Jobs created are illusory and temporary. In the absence of a strong local economy, our children, our most valuable resource, are leaving our shores for opportunities elsewhere. The continuing downward cycle created by their departure must be stopped, or else it will destroy the very fabric of our society. Our allies and partners can help us stop this cycle by promoting the development of private enterprise through investment in our country. We need capital and entrepreneurial expertise.

I implore our allies and partners to consider providing incentives to their nationals to encourage them to invest in our islands, to come to our islands and launch partnerships with our talented people to create a viable economy. Let us once and for all put aside the fiction that we need handouts. What we need are partners and investment to help advance our economy, put an end to the out-migration of our people and propel Palau towards economic self-sufficiency.

We note with satisfaction the decision by the People's Republic of China to invite Taiwan to attend the World Health Assembly. The health and safety of the world's peoples are at the heart of the ideals of the United Nations. In order to further promote those ideals, we recommend that Taiwan be invited to participate meaningfully in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change coming up in Copenhagen and other international organizations and forums.

We have heard the voices of world leaders from countries small and large, powerful and vulnerable. We have heard the voice of science. Let us heed those voices, fulfil our obligations to our people, now and in the next generation, and work for a strong economy and a healthy planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: Over the past year, I, like many others in this Hall, have spoken about the effect of the current global financial crisis on our people and the need for an effective national or international response. Although the crisis is closely related to issues such as peace and security, human rights, development and many other matters of common concern, we cannot let it cast a shadow over all the global challenges that we currently face.

Today, a year after the collapse of the financial markets, cyclical indicators point to economic stabilization. The crisis is not over, however, and the need to restore confidence and repair the financial system remains. Moreover, each of us should make an effort to refrain from raising new barriers and avoid laying the foundations for new global imbalances in the longer run.

In combating climate change, we have finally understood the magnitude of our task and I would like to thank the Secretary-General for hosting the Summit on Climate Change a few days ago. We are not running a 100-metre sprint, but rather a marathon, where one must maintain speed. If we manage to stay on track we all shall be winners in the end. But time is running out. Melting glaciers, frequent and abnormally large hurricanes, floods and heat waves — this is not the planet that we want to leave to our children.

Global and united efforts are needed to reach a comprehensive and ambitious post-2012 climate agreement in Copenhagen this December. I call upon all countries to set binding goals to share the burden. Responsibility must be proportional to the harm that is caused. I am convinced that applying the "polluter-pays" principle would motivate the biggest polluters to multiply their efforts and would therefore have the greatest effect.

Green energy production, renewable energy, energy efficiency and diversification of energy sources — all these contribute not only to sustainable environmental and economic development but also to our security, as we will become less dependent on exhaustible fossil fuels.

As an essential part of cutting greenhouse gas emissions, we foresee a wider use of renewable energy in Estonia, particularly biomass and wind energy. By the end of the year, an Estonian Energy and Climate Agency will be established to help consumers cut energy expenditures and support building energy-efficient homes. This is but one example of how an ambitious climate policy can be used to trigger new growth in the economy.

To uphold the core of the United Nations Charter, we must remain committed to providing the United Nations with sufficient resources to fulfil its unique role in contributing to international security. Compliance with the basic principles enshrined in the Charter, including the obligation of all Members to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, must remain the fundamental basis of the United Nations agenda. The United Nations should remain engaged in areas of tension where it can make a contribution.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate its firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I follow with deep concern the situation in Afghanistan. It is essential that the election process deliver results that are legitimate in the eyes of the Afghans. The future of Afghanistan lies in the hands of the Afghan people; we, the international community, can only help. By consolidating the efforts of the new Government and the international community, lasting progress can and should be achieved. Estonia is one of the countries that have steadily increased their military and civilian contribution to Afghanistan.

I am convinced that the bolstered role and greater visibility of the United Nations throughout the country has a positive impact on the coordination of development activities that in turn will attract more

non-governmental organizations and other international organizations to the area.

Besides conflicts between and inside States, new and asymmetrical cross-border threats have also emerged: the threat from the Internet, for example. Cyber threats not only endanger vital information technology systems but they endanger entire communities. Concurrently with the rapid development of computer technology we are witnessing alarming signs of more sinister developments: cyber attacks are growing more complex and are increasing in frequency. Consequently, major cooperative efforts by both the governmental and the private sectors are required to develop more effective response capabilities.

This growing global concern demands both a better coordinated international approach and an enhanced legal domestic framework, including steps to criminalize malevolent cyber acts. Our long-term aim should be the creation of a universal cyber culture — a universally accessible, secure and safe environment for all.

Regarding humanitarian affairs, our task is equally challenging. Global ecological instability, political and military conflicts, combined with economic instability and population growth, are expected to increase humanitarian needs considerably and require that our efforts be multiplied in the future. We must stand ready to provide a more predictable, equitable and consistently effective response to humanitarian crises. The growing needs require an increase in the amount of assistance, in coordination and in the range of donors.

True, we all have economic concerns at the moment, but it is vital to keep our commitments to providing humanitarian relief. Today's short-sighted financial decisions or fading political will may in the end become far more expensive and entail severe long-term consequences.

I would like to commend the excellent work done by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Member States in making the coordination among humanitarian workers more efficient and implementing the cluster system. The launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund three years ago has also proven a justified effort in providing more rapid and equitable response allocations to disaster-affected areas. As Estonia, together with Ireland, currently co-chairs the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, we urge all donors to apply the principles of good humanitarian donorship to make humanitarian aid more needs-based and its financing more flexible.

As a sign of the priority we give to global humanitarian issues, Estonia this year holds a vice-presidency of the Economic and Social Council and has been leading humanitarian discussions in that body. I am concerned that in many humanitarian situations, especially in conflict situations, adherence to humanitarian principles has become selective, hindering safe and timely access to victims. I fully concur with Under-Secretary-General John Holmes that this is not an ideological luxury but a practical necessity to help ensure timely access as well as the safety and security of humanitarian staff.

It goes without saying that expectations are higher during trying times, and therefore the United Nations actions in carrying out its objectives have increasingly come under scrutiny. Yet, how is the Organization to live up to those high expectations when the United Nations is struggling to reform itself? Over the past years, Member States have undertaken considerable efforts to improve the United Nations system, while one important element, Security Council reform, still remains pending. While recognizing that the reform process is complex, we must also realize that there will be severe consequences if the process remains incomplete.

Regarding another reform area — gender reform — considerable progress that is also relevant to achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been made recently. No security, development or human rights-related goal can be achieved without the full participation of women. Estonia has been a dedicated supporter of the United Nations funds and programmes that foster gender equality. It is our common obligation to ensure that reform becomes a reality without delay.

Facing the first financial crisis of the twenty-first century and the accelerating global warming process, we see the necessity for a united response growing. This is why we, the leaders of all nations, once again have gathered here this week: to remind ourselves to keep our eyes on the horizon of peace and prosperity and to make sure that we are in the same boat.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the

President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gbagbo (*spoke in French*): As I take the floor for the first time at the present session, allow me to join all of those who preceded me at this rostrum in congratulating Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki and telling him how proud we are to see him presiding over the General Assembly at the sixty-fourth session. His election testifies to his personal qualities and is a tribute to the African Union.

I applaud our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. He has kept the United Nations on track and strengthened the United Nations in the context of the multiple crises affecting the world.

Two years ago, from this very rostrum, I updated the Assembly on the crisis in my country, Côte d'Ivoire. At that time, I welcomed the important role played by regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. I particularly dwelt on the internal processes that brought us, the Government and former rebels, to commit to a process of peace that ended the conflict and led to the current preparations for general elections. All through that process, we enjoyed from the support of the United Nations, notably through the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. We benefited even more from the assistance of the President of Burkina Faso, Mr. Blaise Compaore.

Thanks to the efforts of all, and particularly to the Ivorians' hard work and desire for peace, the process has now entered into a irreversible phase. Today, there are no remaining political obstacles to the holding of the elections. I take this opportunity to express once again the gratitude of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations and to all our friends for their commitment to the restoration of peace.

I would also like to share our desire to do our utmost to end the crisis via the ballot box. We are all the more resolute given that the challenges facing today's world require of all States, and in particular small States such as ours, a political strategy based on democracy. Thus armed, we will be able not only to effectively address our current difficulties, but also to contribute to the understanding of and resolution of international crises.

This is what President Treki has called on us to do through the theme of this sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, "Effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development".

We note that, in addition to recurrent political crises, the acute crises facing the world today affect the stability of nations and jeopardize our shared future. In 2008, the energy crisis reached unprecedented proportions. The price of a barrel of oil, it will be recalled, rose to nearly $150. That major crisis took place alongside a food crisis and an unprecedented financial crisis that soon turned into a deep economic crisis. The entire world woke up to the threat posed to social and political equilibrium by the three crises that struck at the same time. These crises shook all our certainties and caused a wave of panic. They showed us in no uncertain terms that nothing can ever be taken for granted, even in big countries.

The entire world mobilized to meet the challenge, both within individual countries and within international institutions and organizations. We saw the International Monetary Fund provide assistance to countries that are not usually the recipients of such aid, such as those of northern Europe. This exceptional mobilization points to the concern of the international community at seeing the situation end in uncontrollable social and political crises.

However, although the mobilization and cooperation were multilateral, the crisis resolution

plans were not. Countries in North America, Europe and Asia adopted national plans. This shows that there are limits to multilateralism and that nation States protect their prerogatives and shoulder their full responsibilities at the economic level, when necessary.

I note, moreover, that the mobilization in Africa and for Africa was quite diffident. It was as though the financial crisis was not also an African crisis, or as if the financial sector in Africa was not sufficiently integrated into the international financial system. Perhaps our continent did not grasp the full extent of the crisis. And yet, the financial crisis has had consequences on the African continent. In Africa, perhaps more than anywhere else, the financial crisis became an economic crisis that underscored the economic and social fragility of our countries.

The lesson we draw from that experience is that no country is immune to crisis. This requires the international community to enhance its vigilance by increasing oversight of the financial system and its institutions at the international level. It would also be timely for us to embark on a reform of the international monetary and financial system. In this context, United Nations reform, and above all reform of its organs, is essential if the United Nations is to play a solid leading role in strengthening multilateralism.

Among the cross-cutting issues in which the United Nations must play a key role are the resurgence of extremism. The entrenchment and hardening of positions are prevailing over dialogue and deepening the chasm between cultures that need to live together in harmony. Hence, the importance of the historic high-level meeting convened in this very Hall on 12 and 13 November 2008 on the urgent need for genuine dialogue among religions with a view to creating a culture of peace. That initiative bolstered activities to raise the awareness of the international community to the need for preventive diplomacy on this key topic, in particular the World Conference on Dialogue, held in Madrid in July 2008, and the launching in July 2005 of the Alliance of Civilizations, under the auspices of the United Nations.

We therefore believe that all of these initiatives in favour of dialogue among cultures, as well as those to come, point to the need to establish a permanent forum for dialogue among civilizations so as to draw peoples together.

I now turn to world peace and security. The only sure way to attain lasting peace is the equitable settlement of conflicts within a reformed, more democratic and more credible Security Council. Together, we need to build a United Nations with a stronger mandate and greater representativity.

In that regard, it would be preferable to entrust the prevention, management and settlement of local conflicts to regional and even subregional organizations. That approach, which was enshrined in April 2008 by the Security Council, should be strengthened by an earnest updating of the mechanism for cooperation with regional organizations, as provided for in the United Nations Charter of 1945.

In that regard, I would like to simply reiterate here the position of my delegation, which is based on our experience of handling and settling the Ivorian crisis. Direct dialogue, like that in Côte d'Ivoire, offers avenues for thought that the United Nations could make good use of. I think that the Burkina Faso delegation can address that issue as well as, if not better than, we can.

Another topic of concern is world poverty. World peace and security are dependent on the eradication of extreme poverty and poverty reduction. That is why my delegation welcomes the convening at the sixty-third session of two high-level meetings on Africa's development needs and the Millennium Development Goals. We welcome the outcomes and recommendations of those meetings.

Côte d'Ivoire is resolved to free itself of the burden of debt that is threatening its development goals. There have been meetings on debt, but there need to be more, and decisions must be taken on debt because the debts that were incurred in the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s today hamper the development of African countries. That must be considered. It is a law of nature that when a small, weak country is overburdened by debt, the original purpose of which is often not known even to its leaders, that country sinks, and drags the world down with it. Africa is part of the world. If a decision is not taken on the issue of the debt of African countries, the entire global financial system will be on course for disaster.

That is why I stress, alongside the problem of debt, the issue of climate change. We talk of climate change, and we are right to do so, but we need to take decisions that are critical for most of our countries. I

do not know the situation in West Africa very well, but it has been shown that, in Central and Southern Africa, the deserts are advancing by two kilometres a year. What does that mean? It means that in 50 years the deserts will have advanced by 100 kilometres and reached the coasts. We must decide.

While the deserts advance, on the coasts villages and houses are disappearing into the sea. That is happening in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere. There are people living today with the water at their feet. There are those who live not knowing if tomorrow it will reach their houses or if their houses will, in fact, be in the sea. Urgent measures are needed. We need not only meetings, but also decisions, and those decisions — on deserts, the sea and floods — must be implemented. Everywhere today — in Burkina Faso, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire — the rains bring disaster, and those very rains that we call for to water our farms have become a cause for alarm. We no longer know if the rains to come bring death or life.

Africa is fighting, and is doing so alone. It would prefer to fight with the rest of the world behind it. That is also why we have come to speak here. Africa no longer wishes to feel abandoned or to fight alone. Soon, in 50 years according to the experts, it will be easier to find oil than clean drinking water, because we will have to go a long way — too far for our economies.

What are we going to do? The issue of clean water has become a problem. Certainly, in some rich oil-producing countries in the Arab world, we have seen our brothers working to make seawater drinkable, but how many countries in the world have the means to turn seawater into drinking water? It is terribly expensive. We need to convene a meeting here at the United Nations on that issue — and not only meetings, but decisions followed by action.

Those are the problems that I came here to talk about on behalf of the Ivorian delegation. Everyone knows that Africa is such that when one delegation talks, it speaks for all delegations because we face the same problems. I would hope that, as of today, we can look beyond internal crises. We all know that Africa has made great progress. It is up to us to strengthen ourselves by daring to fight poverty, extreme poverty and catastrophic climate change. Climate change is dangerous throughout the world, but it is catastrophic for us. We need the help of representatives to tackle this difficult century before us. I pray that God may bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Compaore (*spoke in French*): The sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when the international community, faced with numerous crises, is seeking ways to build a world of shared peace and development. However, although the political and economic consequences of the current financial crisis affect the whole world, they are and will continue to be more severe for African countries, given their fragility and the limited diversity of their economies.

Is it fair that those who have not caused this tremendous international upheaval should pay the highest price? It certainly is not. That is why, in the face of the deep recession besetting the entire planet, it is important to bolster partnerships for development in order to correct the dysfunctions of the currently failing global economic system. I welcome the incisive conclusions of the high-level Conference on the financial and economic crisis, which could lead to the establishment of a more virtuous world government assuring sustainable development for all States.

In order to relaunch growth, achieve full employment and restore confidence, it is essential that

we adopt strict rules to regulate and manage the international financial system. At the same time, it will be necessary to increase aid to developing countries in order to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

On 1 September 2009, Burkina Faso experienced floods that caused extensive loss of life and material damage. I reiterate my deepest thanks to the friends and partners who have supported us in dealing with the consequences of this natural disaster. The growing frequency of such events all over the world is due to the effects of climate change. We must therefore take action to address the pressing need to come up with appropriate solutions. In this regard, I welcome the marked convergence of views and the mobilization of the international community in connection with the issue of climate change.

The fifteenth United Nations Conference on Climate Change, to be held from 7 to 18 December in Copenhagen, will offer countries a prime opportunity to take bold decisions to protect our generation and our planet from the effects of global warming. It is to that end that Burkina Faso will host, from 9 to 11 October in Ouagadougou, the Seventh World Forum of Sustainable Development in the context of climate change. This event will allow Africa, a continent ill-equipped to resist and adapt to the consequences of climate change, to amplify its contribution to the global debate on this issue.

The recurring conflicts affecting the world are a genuine threat to peace and international security, as well as a serious obstacle to the economic and social progress of nations. Burkina Faso wishes to express its deep concern over the current situation in Darfur and southern Sudan, and reiterates its commitment to working with the Sudanese people in their quest for peace. In that connection, Burkina Faso will dispatch a military battalion to join the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, as well as a formed police unit to assist in peacekeeping operations. The support of the international community for the efforts of the Joint African Union-United Nations Mediator to create conditions for productive dialogue and forge a lasting peace agreement between the principal parties is essential.

The equally tragic situation in Somalia calls for genuine support for the Transitional Federal Government so that it can definitively restore security throughout the country and in Somali territorial waters. Burkina Faso is also following political developments in Guinea and Madagascar with particular interest. I urge the various political actors in those two countries to engage in constructive dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure a rapid return to the constitutional order.

I congratulate the African Union and the subregional organizations for the efforts they have made to find satisfactory solutions to numerous hotspots of tension on the continent. The holding of presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau is an example of success on the part of the international community. In particular, I encourage the Peacebuilding Commission to support the Government of Guinea-Bissau in the reconstruction of the country.

In Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, the political actors' commitment to ensuring the effective implementation of the accords to end the crises in those countries affords real reason to hope for the organization of regular and transparent presidential elections in future. I welcome the Security Council's unflagging readiness to work with Côte d'Ivoire on implementing the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, and I encourage it to continue to pursue its efforts to achieve peaceful solutions to conflicts.

In regard to the matter of Western Sahara, Burkina Faso reaffirms its endorsement of Security Council resolution 1813 (2008), supports the Secretary-General's efforts to find a political solution, and considers the Moroccan initiative to negotiate autonomy for the Western Sahara to be an appropriate way to settle the disagreement.

In the Middle East, we welcome the successful conduct of elections in Lebanon and encourage that country to improve its relations with Syria and Israel. The restoration of stability and prospects for normalized relations with Lebanon's neighbours represent an opportunity for calm consideration of a global settlement of the Palestinian question.

The contribution of the Republic of China on Taiwan to assisting the least developed countries should be commended, and its participation in the previous session of the World Health Assembly augurs well for the positive evolution of this country's contribution to the life of the international community.

For some years, the question of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which pose an enormous threat,

has divided the international community. I thank and encourage President Obama for his successful organization and leadership of the Security Council summit on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The commitments made could lead to a denuclearized world that is more ambitious in its exploitation of nuclear power for civil purposes and more vigilant in policing illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.

The reform of the United Nations, which has been on our agenda for more than a decade, calls for a cautious but determined approach, particular as regards the Security Council. I express the hope that negotiations will soon be undertaken regarding the fair and equitable representation of all regions of the world, the strengthening of the effectiveness of the Council's role and the revitalization of the General Assembly. True to the ideals of the United Nations, Burkina Faso will make its contribution to the various issues and actions under way to endow our global Organization with the vitality and authority essential to taking on the new challenges on the horizon.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sleiman (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session and to express my appreciation to his predecessor, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his efforts. I should also like to thank in particular His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his comprehensive annual report on the work of the Organization (A/64/1) and for the special attention that he has consistently devoted to the concerns of Lebanon and its people.

Lebanon closely follows all political, economic, social and legal issues on the agenda of the General Assembly, and we are hopeful and confident that we will be elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2010-2011, with the full support of brotherly and friendly nations in that regard. Lebanon looks forward to that election with great confidence, because we are a founding member of this universal international Organization and contributed significantly to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For thousands of years, the people of Lebanon have made vital contributions to the development of civilization, including innovations that have promoted communication, interaction and dialogue among nations and peoples. These are the same people who set sail in search of new horizons of cooperation and communication and have played a vital role in spreading the values of freedom and democracy, reinforcing the concept of Arab nationalism and establishing the pillars of the intellectual and literary renaissance of the Arab world.

Today, from this rostrum, Lebanon reaffirms its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to the resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), as well as its willingness to contribute seriously and responsibly to the deliberations and resolutions of the Council for the coming two years, especially those aimed at ensuring peace and security in the Middle East. Furthermore, Lebanon will give special consideration to the deliberations on reform of the United Nations and its organs that will enable it to become more effective in addressing the challenges of today's world.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Lebanese Constitution, which was adopted in 1926, two decades before the United Nations was established, stipulates that "There shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The State ... shall respect all religions and creeds and guarantees under its protection, and the free exercise of all religious rites".

The model of coexistence embodied by Lebanon, which allows various confessional communities to participate actively in its political life in an environment of democracy and freedom of thought and expression, runs counter to all trends towards ethnic or religious cleansing and doctrines of the single-thought theory. That is why, last year, I called for the establishment of Lebanon as an internationally recognized centre for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions, in keeping with our role as a bridge of communication between East and West and our message as a country in which 18 different communities interact in a unique and exemplary manner.

One of the primary tasks entrusted to the Security Council is to strive to maintain international peace and security. Indeed, it is very unfortunate that the Arab Middle East, a region that gave rise to the three monotheistic religions, has been an area of tension, conflict and war ever since the Nakba, the tragedy that befell Palestine in 1948 and displaced its people.

Any settlement of the Middle East crisis must be based on a predetermined and comprehensive plan whose basic elements have been set out in the resolutions of international legitimacy, at the Madrid Peace Conference and in the Arab Peace Initiative. Above all, such a settlement requires the genuine political will of the parties to commit themselves to peace and its obligations.

However, the Israeli side has not demonstrated such will, because the soundness and usefulness of a just peace are still being discussed both by the Government and at the grass-roots level in Israel. Furthermore, Israeli threats of attacks and wars continue as ways to exert control and hegemony and impose a fait accompli, if not to bring about expansion, displacement and further encroachment on the rights of Palestinians and Arabs. Meanwhile, Arab countries have together introduced a comprehensive Peace Initiative, which was unanimously adopted at the 2002 Arab League Summit, held in Beirut.

It is thus essential that the international community take appropriate measures to compel Israel to fulfil its international obligations under the peace process within a specific and reasonable time frame, in accordance with the Declaration of the recent Arab League Summit held in Doha, Qatar. How can we persuade our peoples that the international community is capable of achieving a just and comprehensive peace and thus of putting an end to the various aspects of the Middle East conflict, including through an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital, if it cannot force Israel to halt its settlement construction, lift its unjust siege on Gaza and stop the Judaization of Jerusalem?

In that context, it is important to note that people have the right to reclaim their occupied territories by all legitimate and available means, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Everyone here knows how Lebanon was able to liberate most of its territories occupied by Israel in the spring of 2000 after Israel had refused to implement resolution 425 (1978), which called for its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from all Lebanese territories. That occupation lasted 22 continuous years.

Our meeting this year coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). On this occasion, Lebanon would like to stress that the Palestinian refugees' solution is first and foremost a political solution. We fully support all efforts aimed at reinforcing the programmes and capabilities of UNRWA, enabling it to improve the living standards and human conditions of the refugees, in collaboration with the host countries, until a just and final solution to the tragedy of the Palestinians has been reached.

Clearly, such a just and final solution for the Palestinian refugees cannot deny them their natural and legitimate right of return to their lands and homes, nor can it be achieved without the host countries' participation or in violation of their sovereignty, their special circumstances and their national interests. This is why Lebanon rejects any form of settling Palestinian refugees on its territories, for by such rejection it upholds the Palestinian refugees' right of return, in accordance with Lebanon's Constitution and national pact. Let it be clear that such a position will not be reversed. Nor will it be subject to compromise or negotiation. I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the countries that have lent their support to the Lebanese position on this issue and shown a willingness to defend it.

Throughout last year, Lebanon was able to maintain its internal stability and dismantle many Israeli spy networks and terrorist cells while striving to implement resolution 1701 (2006) and strengthen its relations with brotherly and friendly countries. Furthermore, Lebanon was able to hold parliamentary elections. The world witnessed the transparency and integrity of those elections, and the results were accepted by all competing parties. Lebanon has also been able to improve its credibility, avoid the aftermath of the global financial crisis, attract many tourists and investors, and raise its economic growth rate to almost 6 per cent. It is now preparing to host the sixth Francophone Games in a few days.

While parliamentary consultations are taking place in accordance with constitutional provisions and the requirement to forge a national consensus, we are looking forward to forming a national unity government very soon. Such a government would reinstate government dynamics and launch the political, administrative and judicial reform process the Lebanese people aspire to. The fruits of such a process will serve the people and the authorities, thus ensuring its success and continuity.

In parallel, and on the third anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), Lebanon stresses that Israel should be forced to comply with all the provisions of that resolution, especially its withdrawal from all the Lebanese occupied territories, including the Shaba'a farms, the Kfarshouba hills and the northern part of the village of Ghajar, to stop its daily violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and its persistent threats against Lebanon, its institutions and infrastructure.

In this context, Lebanon would like to commend the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the role it is playing in the south of the country, in accordance with the rules of engagement agreed upon and in full coordination with the Lebanese Army. In addition, Lebanon would like to reaffirm that it remains keen to preserve the safety of this Force and reiterates its appreciation for the efforts deployed by its commander and soldiers and for their sacrifices in the service of peace and stability.

Lebanon will pursue its international efforts to force Israel to pay due compensation for the enormous damage it caused through its repeated acts of aggression against Lebanon, including the damage caused by the oil slick resulting from the Israeli bombardment of the Jiyeh power plant in the summer of 2006.

The experience acquired over the past 61 years has confirmed a set of truths. First, the Palestinian cause is at the core of the Middle East conflict. Secondly, Israel's resorting to force to impose a fait accompli is futile and will weaken neither the will nor the determination of the Arab people to restore their rights. Thirdly, partial and unilateral solutions will not achieve genuine peace, and unjust solutions are short-lived.

Since the middle of the last century, the world has witnessed fundamental political, intellectual and ideological shifts that have had a profound impact on nations and their interactions, along with a troubling accumulation of economic, social and environmental predicaments. No matter how local or regional some conflicts and crises have been in the past, in the current era of globalization they have become global in nature or acquired a global dimension. Such has been the case for the phenomenon of international terrorism, the global financial crisis and the contagious diseases that are spreading across continents.

In ancient times, and now in the modern world, as told in the fiercest epic tales, wars beget tragic and painful events and give rise to costly and horrific experiences where endless blood and countless tears are shed and disappointment and tragedies prevail. We therefore hope that the United Nations, which from the outset was established to prevent wars and resolve conflicts through peaceful means, will persist in its endeavour to achieve righteousness and establish justice through active and unbiased international efforts.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic.

Mr. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Ali Treki on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. We are confident that the international community will greatly benefit from his experience and wisdom on the political and human fronts, and at the local and international levels. I also take this opportunity warmly to thank the Secretary-General and all Governments, international organizations and permanent members who have offered support and have promoted peace and stability in Somalia, and who have delivered to our country the aid necessary to protect our sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity.

I wish to express our condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in defence of peace and stability in Somalia. I would particularly like to thank the African Union, which has made tremendous sacrifices for the cause of peace in Somalia.

I would now like to talk about the efforts and progress made by the Government of Somalia since it came to power through the Djibouti peace process — progress made despite the enormous difficulties and challenges facing the Somali nation, particularly given that it was established after 18 years of anarchy and chaos. My Government's priorities include improving the security situation, promoting efforts towards reconciliation and providing essential humanitarian assistance to the displaced and the suffering in our country.

Unfortunately, however, the rebels are endeavouring to overthrow the Somali Government, which is still taking its first steps in achieving security. These rebel elements have conducted a violent insurrection against the Government, fuelled by the negative effects and consequences of the past 18 years, which are further compounded by prevailing high unemployment and our country's weakness in the field of security. It is clear that extremist foreign elements have joined the ranks of the insurgency and some of these foreign extremists hold key rebel leadership positions.

I would like to recall that we thwarted the attempted coup d'état perpetrated by the rebels against the Government. We believe that we were able to prevail thanks, first and foremost, to God, and then through the efforts of our Government and people and the help we received from the international community and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We are currently endeavouring to promote and bolster the Somali security forces, to create new naval forces and a new coast guard to tackle the problem of piracy, which continues to threaten international shipping in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. However, despite all our achievements we still have a long road to travel.

Rebellion in Somalia is a new form of insurgency that is emerging in the world today. This rebellion is conducted by foreign and Somali extremists who are against Islam, against peace, against security and against stability. They are spoilers who sow destruction and take exploit the chaos and anarchy that have existed in Somalia since 1991.

We suggest that what is happening in Somalia should not be underestimated or taken lightly. The international community should take prompt and decisive steps to ensure that our people are not held hostage by these extremist groups who are working against our freedom and our destiny. From this rostrum I would like to state that if the world does not comprehend the gravity of what is happening in Somalia, then the consequences will be very harmful. The troubles we are experiencing threaten to proliferate into neighbouring countries and indeed throughout the world.

The problem of international terrorism is not confined to Somalia and this problem should be addressed at the international level.

I turn now to the issue of piracy, which has recently become a matter of major concern for the international community. The phenomenon of piracy is closely linked to the current security situation in Somalia. As a result, as long as the security situation in Somalia remains unchanged, piracy will continue in one way or another. We would like to say, however, that there has of late been a reduction of piracy as a result of collective international endeavours. Still, it remains essential to make additional efforts to combat piracy.

Toxic waste sunk off the Somali coast, unlawful fishing and the pillaging of national wealth are a violation of Somali sovereignty and cause considerable damage, which has a negative effect on the environment through the pollution caused.

We are resolved to engage in a political dialogue that is open to all Somali stakeholders, including the armed rebels.

We are determined to sit down at the negotiating table with all parties, even those who are against the Government, any time and any place, in order to end the conflict raging in our country. We will spare no effort to end the conflict and find a lasting political solution. We will ensure the security of our people and protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, the extremists do not believe in the benefit of any manner of dialogue or negotiation; they believe only in guns and cannons.

We are ready to establish a firm foundation for an open, transparent and participatory democratic political system by creating sound democratic institutions that reflect the collective political will and the cultural values of the Somali people. That system will be based on an institutional regime and constitutional mechanisms designed to protect human rights and the rule of law.

Similarly, we will foster genuine Islamic principles that encourage tolerance, personal freedoms, respect for individual rights and equal rights for all under the law, without regard to gender, clan or ethnic origin.

In addition, we will work tirelessly towards establishing a free-market economic system to attract foreign direct investment and encourage private ownership. The system we will introduce will have sound and effective financial institutions with strong built-in anti-corruption mechanisms.

We will use all available means to rebuild a national Somali State that is at peace with itself, with its neighbours and with the international community. Furthermore, we intend to cooperate closely with the international community in the security sphere.

At this trying moment in history, Somalia urgently needs the support and assistance of the international community, in particular in the form of security and humanitarian aid. Since 1991, Somalia has not enjoyed peace, stability or security. Thus, it has been difficult to achieve social and economic development and to protect human rights.

Security and stability may be established if certain essential measures are taken, including promotion of the security and police components, the judiciary and administrative institutions. African Union troops should be increased to a necessary level and augmented by other troops, provided that they are sufficiently funded, trained and equipped to carry out their task. In order to restore security in Somalia, those measures must be implemented decisively and as soon as possible.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the context of humanitarian assistance, it must be emphasized that the situation of refugees, both within Somalia and outside its borders, continues to deteriorate. There are nearly 3.8 million people in the country requiring humanitarian assistance. Our people are experiencing a real humanitarian tragedy that is compounded by several years of drought. Humanitarian access to those in need is considerably hampered by the security situation that has deteriorated as a result of the conflict.

In connection with Security Council resolutions on the arms embargo, I urge the Council to reconsider the matter and appeal to it to assist us in strengthening our security forces without which any endeavour to rebuild infrastructure and achieve security and stability in Somalia will be impossible.

On the donors conference held in Brussels in April 2009 pursuant to Security Council resolution 1863 (2009), we wish to ask donor countries which have made funds available to Somalia to speed up the allocation of additional funding. I also urge United

Nations Member States and Security Council members to take further measures to support the Republic of Somalia more effectively in order to end the intransigence of the extremists and to ensure that no further obstacles exist to rehabilitating Somalia and rebuilding its infrastructure so that we can bring an end to the genuine daily tragedy of the people in Somalia.

We firmly believe that our progress on security is likely to enable us to counter the negative economic and social impacts of the chaotic events of the past 18 years. Somalia would be in a position to revive the entrepreneurial spirit of the people of Somalia. We have already begun to make tangible progress with remittances from Somalis abroad. If Somalia enjoyed some level of stability and security our economy could progress reasonably in the coming years. In any event, peace, stability and development are all interlinked; there can be no peace without development or development without peace and stability.

The worldwide economic decline has severely affected the people of Somalia and has placed an additional burden on their shoulders. From this rostrum, we reiterate our appeal for joint, urgent action for Somalia. I stand before the Assembly fully confident in the future of Somalia. It is a country with vast natural and human resources. We believe and we are confident that, with support, we will be able to make genuine and concrete progress.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I have the special honour and privilege today to address this esteemed forum and to share with you the views of the Republic of Macedonia regarding the topics of this session, but also on other current issues that concern us all, directly or indirectly.

At the outset, I would like to convey my congratulations and to greet the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki. I would also like to extend to him our full readiness for cooperation in the course of his mandate. At the same time, I wish to congratulate the President of the Assembly at its sixty-third session, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his successful presidency. Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to acknowledge the engagements and the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, which indisputably have contributed to the enhancement of the role and reputation of the Organization.

Before I refer to the key theme of this session, I would like to remind the Assembly of the fear and uncertainty we all felt exactly one year ago, right here. It was fear and uncertainty over the scope and the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis. I recall this in order to emphasize the urgent need for the United Nations to use this opportunity to contribute to processes that will facilitate the overcoming of the effects of the crisis. It is even more important that we assist in preventing new such crises. In this context the serious economic problems most of us have been facing should not shift our focus from the absolute priority, which is the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

The issue of climate change, which today represents one of the biggest challenges facing humanity, is extremely high on our national agenda, but also on that of the United Nations. We owe it to our children and to the generations to come to preserve our planet. If we do not establish, urgently and immediately, the highest and most sustainable standards for how we treat the environment, we will pay the price in the future. Time is running out, and there is no possibility for us to further postpone

coordinated and serious measures to combat the negative consequences of climate change. Climate change and global warming have an increasingly serious impact on economic growth and on the quality, quantity and price of food. That exacerbates poverty. It is therefore imperative that we tackle this issue immediately.

The Republic of Macedonia, as a party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change for more than a decade now, has been actively working on implementing the goals set out in the Convention. We have — including me personally — assigned special significance to the forthcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, and we all have great expectations for it. The Macedonian authorities are truly committed to undertaking numerous concrete activities with a view to raising awareness in society regarding this issue. The Republic of Macedonia is fully prepared to make its contribution to the global effort.

When we address issues related to peacekeeping and stability, a large majority of us, unfortunately, regularly expresses dissatisfaction regarding the current state of affairs. Peace and security are compromised on a daily basis in certain regions of the world. We are faced with the continuation of old and frozen conflicts, but also with a series of new tensions in many regions throughout the world.

When it comes to the reasons for the constant crises besetting our world, or certain parts of it, allow me to seize this opportunity to quote Martin Luther King, who in 1967 uttered a recipe for overcoming bilateral, regional and global crises. He said:

> "Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream. Let us be dissatisfied until that day when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid."

With reference to these words, I welcome the topic of this session, which is meant to assist us in finding effective responses to global crises. The responses to most questions must take into consideration not only the present and the reality of today's world, but on top of that, we must anticipate the future and take on board the objectives we have set ourselves.

Instead of paying lip service to multilateralism, which I do not believe will help, a real approach based on meaningful multilateralism and action is required. The Republic of Macedonia and I personally strongly believe in and strive towards effective multilateralism. We believe that strengthening multilateralism is the only way to advance towards and achieve our primary goals of peace, democracy, human freedoms and rights and respect of international law and principles.

The Republic of Macedonia strongly supports joint efforts to improve the overall coherence of the United Nations system. We need a United Nations that will, in the best possible and most efficient manner, realize the expectations and the objectives of its Member States.

The Republic of Macedonia is a country that has immense experience in nurturing and affirming dialogue and in advancing dialogue among civilizations. It is a unique example of a successful multi-ethnic and multi-faith country.

The summit on Dialogue Among Civilizations that was held in the Republic of Macedonia, in Ohrid in 2003, with assistance and support from the United Nations, is an example of the kind of regular annual meetings at the highest level that are being held in South-East Europe under the auspices of UNESCO. This not only represents recognition for my country but also demonstrates the value of dialogue in the advancement of security and in development.

Since its independence, the Republic of Macedonia has been unswervingly committed to the promotion of democracy and the improvement of the living standards of its people, and to reform in all spheres of our economy. The Republic of Macedonia promotes a society founded upon the rule of law, respect for human rights, multi-ethnic cohabitation, dialogue and mutual understanding.

Over the past number of years, the Republic of Macedonia has achieved impressive progress that has been recognized and acknowledged by all. My country today is looking forward to the initiation of the accession negotiations with the European Union. My country has fulfilled all of the conditions set for NATO membership. It is an active and strong supporter of regional cooperation. It remains fully committed to good-neighbourly relations and to dialogue as a key tool for overcoming all of the issues that continue to beset the region.

All of my country's Governments have consistently focused on the realization of the country's two top strategic priorities: accession to the European Union and accession to NATO. The Republic of Macedonia is dedicated to sharing and contributing to the Euro-Atlantic values in a common vision for the enlargement of the stability and security zone in South-East Europe.

The actions of our southern neighbour that prevented the Republic of Macedonia from acceding to the NATO alliance were contrary to the obligations undertaken in the 1995 interim agreement. That was done in an attempt to influence the outcome of the negotiations held under the auspices of the United Nations and was completely opposite to the common vision. Nevertheless, I would like to stress before this forum that the Republic of Macedonia is sincerely dedicated to the process of resolving our differences with our southern neighbour within the framework of the mechanism set out in United Nations resolutions.

The Republic of Macedonia believes in law and in justice. The Republic of Macedonia believes in the International Court of Justice as a body of the United Nations and as a protector and upholder of the law. Beyond the absurdity of the dispute with our southern neighbour, the Republic of Macedonia sincerely hopes that soon the only obstacle that prevents us from taking our rightful place in the Euro-Atlantic family will be removed.

In spite of the flagrant violation of international obligations by our southern neighbour — in respect whereof the Republic of Macedonia has filed an appeal at the International Court of Justice — we are actively participating in the negotiation process with the Republic of Greece. I would like to state clearly that we are prepared to discuss only the issues foreseen in the United Nations resolutions. The Republic of Macedonia is prepared to seek a solution that is a reasonable and fair compromise and that will not touch upon or deny our national, cultural or linguistic identity in any way, a solution that would obtain the legitimacy and the seal of approval of our citizens. There is no more sovereign right than the right of self-determination and self-identification. That right has been cherished by many generations before us.

I hope that the Republic of Greece will abandon its policy of taking action from a position of power in order to unfavourably influence the outcome of the disputed issue. I expect that the political leadership will look towards the wider interest in terms of permanent stabilization of the entire region. We believe that with truthful and sincere willingness and preparedness we can reach a solution whereby there will be neither winners nor losers.

Allow me to take this opportunity to recall Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Charter of the United Nations:

> "[t]o develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace".

Let not this Organization betray the expectations of the vast majority of people who set their hope on it, and let it not betray the ideals of its founders. The Organization must prepare itself to come up with responses to existing and emerging challenges posed by our times. When I say "the Organization", I refer to all of us who support those processes. The Republic of Macedonia sees in the Organization the potential to maintain stability in international affairs and a unique opportunity to tackle the numerous challenges posed to humanity. The Republic of Macedonia, as has been the case hitherto, shall continue to respect and support the values and principles enshrined in the Charter.

Allow me to finish my address with the words of the former Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan, who said that if the goal of humanity is progress in peace and freedom, the state of peace is not only a state free of conflict, it is a state of respecting human freedom and rights. We are still far from that goal. However, indisputably, huge and serious progress has been achieved.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicholas Joseph Orville Liverpool, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Nicholas Joseph Orville Liverpool, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicholas Joseph Orville Liverpool, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Liverpool: I begin by joining my colleague Heads of State in congratulating Mr. Ali Treki on his well-deserved election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for his effective stewardship of the sixty-third session and to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts to promote global peace, security and development.

It is an internationally accepted fact that we are in a period characterized by unprecedented crisis. Crises related to basic human needs such as food, water and energy are contributing to great distress and hardship in every region of our world and precipitating an escalation in poverty, which we in the United Nations had committed to halve at the beginning of this decade. These crises have the potential to bring great social and political instability to many regions.

The sheer complexity of these matters and their connectivity with human development make the task of addressing them very daunting. The progress made by the international community in this respect must be noted. However, we must all be mindful that whatever the perceived impact or fallout experienced by the economies of the world, the citizens of the small vulnerable States among us will be the worst hit, and therefore they continue to warrant the special attention of this body.

The United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, which convened last June in this Hall, brought renewed international attention to the magnitude of this crisis. The outcome document (resolution 63/303, annex) confirmed, and further emphasizes, that the crisis has had a particularly negative effect on developing countries such as Dominica.

The irony is that though severely affected by the crisis, our countries had absolutely no relationship or contribution to its cause. It also threatens the realization of the Millennium Development goals. In the Caribbean it is estimated that the impact of the crisis has created the worst set of economic circumstances since the era of independence of the countries of the region, bringing with it depressed commodity prices, a decline in agricultural export earnings, contraction of tourism revenues, retreating foreign direct investment, decreased access to external financing and declining remittances, among others.

At the regional level the Governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are addressing the impacts of the crisis through the establishment in July of a task force that will allow the member States, along with the heads of our regional financial institutions, to facilitate the mobilization of funds and present a core set of proposals for dealing with this crisis. Our Heads of Government have also agreed to the institution of a programme of collective enhancement of our financial services sector through improved national regulatory and supervisory systems, and also through rationalization and consolidation to ensure safety, soundness and stability in that sector.

We concur with the call for the strengthening of institutional arrangements for international cooperation in tax matters. Furthermore, we endorse the recommendation of the Conference of the CARICOM Heads of State for consistent and non-discriminatory implementation of transparency requirements and international standards for exchange of information.

We believe that in order to adapt to the adverse impact of the financial crisis it is crucial that small island developing States and less developed countries receive the following: one, speedy implementation of the decisions of the Conference; two, assistance to facilitate economic diversification while responding to the crisis and the negative impact of climate change; three, fiscal support in view of already high debt burdens; four, practical assistance from United Nations agencies through a compact framework; and five, stimulus funds to be made available by bilateral and multilateral entities.

With the onset of the financial crisis, there is now a wrong perception that the food crisis is over. Food insecurity continues unabated around the world, and it is estimated that more than a billion people go to bed hungry every night. This is both unacceptable and unsustainable. The creation of the United Nations system high-level Task Force on Global Food Security was a timely and welcome initiative of the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization. Increasing investments in agriculture in the developing nations is critical to addressing the food crisis. We therefore welcome the Group of Eight pledge of $15 billion over the next three years for enhancing food security, but we warn that the desired objective may not be achieved if harmful subsidies in agriculture continue to prevail in the developed countries.

Completion of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations at the World Trade Organization takes on renewed importance as we seek solutions to the global financial crisis. An appropriate trade environment for a sustainable recovery for all is highly desirable. It is in that spirit that we must renew our commitment to re-engage in the Doha negotiations with the declared objective of concluding them in 2010.

The status quo has served only to further marginalize small and vulnerable States and has led to the almost total collapse of some of our major industries, including sugar and bananas, which provided the livelihoods of numerous farming families and communities. Our Governments continue the struggle to develop their economies in the absence of the much-needed foreign exchange that those industries generated. Increasing the competitiveness of developing countries and their effective participation in world trade underscores that Aid for Trade as a new and independent source of development financing must be at the centre of the trade and development agenda.

Climate change has emerged as one of the leading challenges of our generation. If it is not arrested and sufficiently managed, its adverse impact has the potential to undermine human security and the social and economic stability of all nations. All around us we see evidence of escalating climate change in the form of severe weather, floods, drought, devastating hurricanes and cyclones and rising sea levels.

Small island developing States are most vulnerable to the negative impact of climate change. As a consequence, we find our countries in the front line of this monumental challenge to humanity. In Dominica and several of the sister islands of the Caribbean, situated as we are in the hurricane belt, there have been and will continue to be an almost annual cycle of considerable damage to houses, roads, coastlines and other infrastructure. For many of our countries there is a constant struggle to achieve economic development and a higher quality of life for our people, only to find ourselves experiencing these heavy losses and having routinely to start all over again.

As global preparations for the critical Copenhagen conference continue, the urgency to act to address climate change has increased. What has long been pointed out by the scientists has now been confirmed by those whose unsustainable production has precipitated an Earth crisis, which must be addressed if our planet is to survive. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/281 of 3 June this year, recognized the security implications of climate change as an additional dimension of the crisis. That is clearly evident for many small island States whose viability and very existence are threatened by conditions such as the rising sea levels.

Dominica is at the forefront of nature conservation. Upon attaining political independence in 1978, our country was aptly dubbed the "Nature Island of the Caribbean" in view of our unwavering commitment to the management and conservation of our abundant biodiversity, extensive national parks system, rich forest resources, mountain ranges, fresh water resources and a pure marine environment. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September 2002, the then Prime Minister of Dominica, the Honourable Pierre Charles, proclaimed our country as the "Nature Island of the World". Today in the presence of the world gathering in this body, I announce Dominica's intention to make our country a model for sustainable development. A cordial invitation is extended to the international community to contribute to this noble venture.

Dominica continues to work closely within the framework of small island States to continue to bring our perspective, as climate change front-line States, to the negotiating table. We are contributing to a solution to the effects of climate change by pursuing measures at the national level to promote energy efficiency, reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and develop our

geothermal potential for national energy needs, as well as for the possible export of clean energy to our neighbours, in the first instance to the French overseas Departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Dominica is already generating 40 per cent of its electricity by hydropower. We are at an advanced stage of geothermal energy development, which by 2015 should enable us to reach the target of 100 per cent electricity generation by renewable energy. We express our gratitude to France and the European Union for their commendable cooperation towards the shift to renewable energy.

Dominica is therefore encouraged by the many expressions of support for a successful outcome of the Copenhagen meeting made by world leaders at the high-level Summit on Climate Change held a few days ago in this Hall. There is an urgent need for a greater demonstration of political will in this regard. I therefore urge every Head of State or Government to seize the moment to reach an agreement that will protect the inhabitants of this planet from one of the most serious challenges ever to confront humanity.

Dominica remains concerned about the current economic situation in our sister island of Haiti. We recognize the important role of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in ensuring the stability of that country. We commend all troop-contributing States for their engagement in Haiti, and we appreciate the support of the Security Council in extending the mandate of the Mission. Haiti needs considerable development assistance in order to consolidate the stability that MINUSTAH's presence has fostered and to ensure the success of the peacebuilding process. In this regard, we endorse and applaud the decision of the Secretary-General to appoint former United States President Clinton as Special Envoy for Haiti. We hope that this appointment will advance the cause of rebuilding that country. Dominica, through its actions and also through CARICOM, will continue to do all in its power to advance the quality of life of the Haitian people.

Central to my country's development thrust is a particular focus on the advancement of our indigenous people. Consistent with this priority of the United Nations, we support the continued and expanded efforts of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the implementation of the measures contained in its recommendations. In this connection, we welcome the recommendations of the eighth session of the Permanent Forum on indigenous women, the economic development and human rights of indigenous peoples, and specific actions in relation to the Arctic region. Dominica has undertaken and continues to undertake important initiatives to improve the social development of our indigenous people.

We come together every year in the general debate in a true spirit of common resolve and partnership. This common resolve and partnership must assume greater meaning this year because the tasks before the international community are enormous and necessitate collective action. However challenging may be the efforts towards their solution, it seems evident that only genuine global cooperation and concerted multilateral action have the possibility of yielding favourable results. But committed multilateral action in the face of these crises has so far proved to be elusive. A greater demonstration of political will should ensure multilateral action in confronting these crises, as it is an absolute necessity for the survival of this planet.

I take this opportunity to recognize all the countries and organizations that have assisted Dominica and the more vulnerable States in our development thrust. Particular reference must be made to those developing countries which, while dealing with their own domestic challenges, have extended a true fraternal hand of friendship. To all, we express our most sincere gratitude. We also reiterate the call of this General Assembly for an end of the United States embargo against the Republic of Cuba and look forward to an early date for its removal.

Finally, as we chart a most progressive development course for our future, we should ensure that it includes the full implementation of the recommendations emanating from the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. We should also make every effort to leave Copenhagen with a framework for a firm commitment and a sound climate agreement that will protect the inhabitants of this planet, particularly the most vulnerable, from one of the most serious challenges ever to confront humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicholas Joseph Orville Liverpool, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I am indeed honoured to address this body on behalf of the people of Kiribati, but let me start by congratulating Mr. Ali Treki on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. The tasks ahead of him and indeed ahead of us all are challenging. I am confident, however, that with cooperative efforts and commitment from all of us and with the President's able leadership of this session, we should be able to rise to the challenge before us. I also take the opportunity to thank the President's predecessor, Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann, for his commendable leadership during the previous session.

Every year, we gather in this Hall to deliberate on the daunting challenges that continue to confront us as citizens of the international community. We gather as leaders to find solutions to these challenges that will ensure the survival of humanity not just today but tomorrow and beyond.

Climate change is indeed the greatest moral challenge to humanity in our time, and I fear that our children and grandchildren will look back and ask us the question: "How is it that they knew what they knew yet they did so little?" We simply cannot afford the consequences of inaction. The people of my country are already feeling the impacts of climate change, which will only worsen over time. We, together with those of other low-lying States, will become victims of climate change.

I have been advocating a combination of pragmatic adaptation strategies for my people. It is our overwhelming desire to maintain our homeland and our sovereignty. However, with the inevitable decline in the ability of our islands to support life — let alone increasing populations — due to rising sea levels, we must also provide opportunities for those of our people who wish to migrate to be able to do so on merit and with dignity. Our approaches will be time-relevant, responding to the different levels of threat and impacts of climate change on our islands and our people as time goes by.

We expect greenhouse gas emitters to take appropriate action to mitigate these negative effects. We ask for assistance with our adaptation efforts and we ask those who might need our labour to be able to open their doors. It is important to stress that these options are not mutually exclusive.

The President returned to the Chair.

Our relocation strategy requires the support of the international community. On previous occasions, I have referred to existing initiatives with our regional development partners, and I wish to say again that I am grateful to the Governments of New Zealand and Australia for their support through the Pacific Access Category scheme, the Kiribati Australia Nursing Initiative and the Australia-Pacific Technical College programme. These are models that we believe can be implemented more broadly as a win-win option for all concerned. Pacific leaders have agreed to work together to address climate change through the 2008 Niue Declaration on Climate Change.

Internationally, the declaration adopted by Alliance of Small Island States leaders a few days ago outlines the issues of importance to small island developing States and calls for action on climate change, particularly leading up to Copenhagen. Resolution 63/281 on climate change and its possible security implications is a landmark decision of the General Assembly that acknowledges the link between climate change and security. I commend our Pacific ambassadors in New York for initiating and driving that resolution, and I thank the sponsors for their support.

I appreciate that reaching consensus in Copenhagen will not be an easy task, but I do believe that it is possible and that it is imperative that we do so. If we can mobilize trillions of dollars to address the challenges of the global economic crisis, then we must be equally capable of taking the action necessary to

deal with the challenges of the global environment. Over the past few days, I have been deeply heartened to see leaders' strong commitment to tackling this common challenge together, to hear leaders resolve to look beyond national interests and focus on the global interest, and by their understanding of the predicament of those on the front line of climate change.

To be able to see leaders' strong determination to seal the deal in Copenhagen — a deal that, among other things, will address the plight of the most vulnerable — has given me hope and restored my faith in humanity and in the relevance of our global community and our global leadership. I take this opportunity to strongly commend the Secretary-General for his initiative in organizing the high-level Summit on Climate Change. That Summit provided us with the opportunity as leaders to talk face to face and to agree on a way forward for the climate change negotiations. I also thank my fellow leaders for their understanding, compassion and political will collectively to address this crisis and its impacts.

It is now absolutely necessary that we capitalize on this collective political will. We must direct our negotiators to act accordingly to ensure that our common resolve as leaders is in fact given effect. I know that we will not be able to agree on all issues, but at the same time I am sure there are some fundamental issues that we cannot afford not to agree on. Let us not waste any more time on diplomatic talk, language, drafting of amendments, posturing and empty platitudes. We know what needs to be done. It has been called many things — a new world order, the grand bargain, a new green deal — but Copenhagen gives us the opportunity to enter into a global compact for action on climate change between developed and developing countries, North and South, East and West. This might be our last chance. If we do not act now, who the hell is going to do it?

We have declared the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), the largest marine protected area in the world, covering more than 400,000 square kilometres of ocean area. It constitutes something like 11 per cent of our exclusive economic zone. PIPA is a collective partnership between my Government, Conservation International and New England Aquarium. The preservation of the Phoenix Islands and the surrounding ocean is our gift, our statement to humanity, in the face of climate change. It is our contribution to international efforts to significantly reduce biodiversity loss by the year 2010. Even now as we confront the possibility that our islands will become uninhabitable within this century due to rising sea levels, we recognize the value of protecting something that we firmly believe to be the common heritage of all mankind.

We are indeed encouraged to see the emergence of ocean conservation and management initiatives in the Pacific. Such initiatives include the Micronesia Challenge, the Coral Triangle Initiative and the Nauru Agreement. Kiribati and the Pacific are committed to the sustainable conservation and management of its oceans. At the Pacific Islands Forum in Australia last month, the leaders of the Pacific adopted the Pacific Oceanscape initiative, aimed at promoting collaboration and exchanges between marine protected areas in the region and with other partners. We call for support for this initiative from the international community.

The impacts of the climate crisis, the international financial crisis and the food and energy crisis have ended our efforts to achieve sustainable development and our way forward towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The particular economic and environment vulnerability of Kiribati as a small island developing State should be taken into account when considering us for graduation from least developed country status. Assistance provided to the least developed countries helps us at this point in time in our efforts to address challenges we face as a nation. To lose that assistance would be detrimental to our efforts and to the livelihood of our people. We reiterate our call to the United Nations to reconsider the listing for the graduation of Kiribati and other countries in the Pacific.

On the issue of global governance, the United Nations is undergoing change to adapt to the realities of our time. It must maintain its relevance if it is to address the security challenges that the world continues to face. We believe that the United Nations should be an inclusive Organization, particularly for States such as Taiwan that make a contribution to world harmony and have demonstrated time and again their willingness and ability to contribute positively to international cooperative efforts. Taiwan has demonstrated its commitment to international peace and security through its contributions to national, regional and international development programmes. It is only fair and fitting, therefore, that Taiwan should be allowed to

participate meaningfully in meetings and activities of the United Nations organs. Given the impact of climate change and the demands of aviation safety and security on its development and the well-being of its people, we now appeal for the meaningful participation of Taiwan in the work and activities of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In concluding, in the face of the common challenges facing the global community, it is encouraging to hear leaders call for a new global order in which our interests as fellow citizens of the planet override our national interests, particularly where global human security and lives are under serious threat. This goal reaffirms the principle of collective responsibility for the common challenges that we face.

The United Nations will and must continue to play a significant role in the new world order, particularly in mobilizing the political will and the necessary action and resources required to implement it. Copenhagen will be the test of the political will and commitment that we have declared over the past few days as leaders. It will determine the fate of the most vulnerable and eventually the whole of humanity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zardari: I am honoured to return to this chamber of hope, peace and cooperation. I wish to convey the warm greetings of the people of Pakistan. We are delighted to see you, Mr. President, presiding over the General Assembly. The high ideals of the United Nations have inspired our vision of a global society that is based on peace and justice, freedom and human rights, equality and equal opportunity, freedom from want and hunger, tolerance and harmony — a global society that believes in the sovereign equality of nations large and small, and that promotes truth and reconciliation.

On behalf of the people of Pakistan, I assure you, Mr. President, of our cooperation in fashioning a safer and better world in which all children — yours and mine — shall live in peace and harmony. This is a world in which we shall all depend on one another. It demands a return to the path of the United Nations. It calls for reforming the United Nations on the principles of equality and consensus building.

In Pakistan, the will of the people has prevailed. Our people have witnessed a profound democratic transformation. We have entered a new era of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Democracy in Pakistan is of great importance not only to our country, but also to our region and the world. Pakistan has struggled hard for democracy. My late wife, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, led the fight for democracy and laid down her life for it. Following in the footsteps of her great father, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, she made the ultimate sacrifice so that our nation might live in democracy. We are now following in her footsteps. I, my party, my people and Pakistan's democracy are grateful to the international community and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for constituting an international commission of investigation into her assassination. We are confident that the commission will bring out all the dimensions of her life, work and tragic assassination.

The world supports our struggle for democracy, and we are grateful for that support. Democracy in Pakistan is beginning to achieve successes in the fight against militancy. The real challenge now is to make democracy sustainable, and indeed irreversible. This requires that democracy should be able to deliver. It should meet the aspirations of our people to progress and prosperity. It must give our people peace and stability.

Unfortunately, our neighbourhood has witnessed decades of conflict. Pakistan has suffered greatly from

terrorism and religious extremism. Terrorism and extremism were not previously known to our society and culture. Religious extremism entered our society and the region when we all in the free world decided to confront a rival ideology. The policy was based on the exploitation of religion to motivate Muslims around the world to wage jihad. It was a policy whereby jihadi leaders were referred to as the moral equivalents of George Washington. It was a policy that allowed warlords and criminals to destroy civilizations to come. The virus multiplied and has affected the world.

To eliminate militancy we must strike at its roots. Surgery alone will not be enough. We need to address the causes of deprivation, poverty and illiteracy. We need to adopt dialogue, development and a wise use of force as our strategy.

Pakistan has firmly responded to the challenges of extremism and militancy. Democracy has given our people ownership of the fight against terrorism. Today, our nation stands fully united in this struggle. Our law enforcement agencies have, within a short span of time, cleared a large area in Malakand of militants. Of the more than 2.5 million civilians who were forced to leave their homes, about 2 million were hosted by their relatives and friends. I salute the host families. Democracy and political ownership of the war have proved to be the chief weapons in the fight against militancy. In the short span of 10 weeks, most of the internally dislocated have returned to their homes. We are now engaged in rebuilding their lives.

Pakistan appreciates the international community's support and understanding of our efforts. We urge the international community to further reinforce this support. We are determined to eliminate terrorism and extremism from our territory. To that end, the early return of peace and stability in Afghanistan is critical. The flow of weapons across the region must stop. The funding and support to militants by drug barons and other elements must stop.

We also believe that regional cooperation against terrorism and extremism holds great promise. We emphasize regional efforts for peace and stability. Pakistan will continue to work with Afghanistan and the international community for the early restoration of peace and stability in that country. Pakistan has hosted almost 3 million Afghan refugees for the past three decades. We have been providing for them on our own. We call upon the world to help in the safe return of the refugees to their homes.

Pakistan's democracy has begun to deliver. We are doing more in self-interest. We urge the world's democracies to do more for the peace and development of the people affected by militancy and terror. We need to create economic opportunities for our people. We urge our friends and partners to help Pakistan by providing market access for the economic revival and well-being of their own people.

Pakistan desires friendly relations with India. We believe that dialogue is the only way forward. The absence of dialogue leads to tensions that must be avoided. We look forward to the resumption of the composite dialogue process. We seek a peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues with India. Meaningful progress towards a resolution of the Kashmir dispute is necessary for durable peace and stability in South Asia.

Pakistan also supports the rights of the Palestinian people as guaranteed in several United Nations resolutions. Durable peace in the Middle East requires that the issue of Palestine be addressed meaningfully.

We also call for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

All nations seek security. Peace and security are closely linked. Equal security for all is important. We support all efforts for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The principle of equal security is of fundamental importance for achieving those objectives. Imbalances in security, especially at the regional level, need to be redressed. Pakistan will continue to play a constructive role in promoting conflict resolution and restraint in South Asia and in promoting initiatives on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation on the basis of non-discrimination.

Pakistan's priority is economic development. We wish to build on our internal strengths. In this effort we seek partnerships. We seek to develop a win-win situation. We are engaged in economic revival by developing our agriculture, building mega-hydro projects, initiating water conservation projects, undertaking infrastructure projects, promoting regional trade and cooperation and encouraging, beyond Government, the corporate sector in development. We

need to develop a framework for cooperation that will deliver quickly.

In overcoming the challenges faced by the world, the United Nations has a central role to play. Guided by its principles and the high ideals in its Charter, the United Nations is destined to succeed. A democratic Pakistan will continue to uphold the ideals and values of the United Nations. Together we shall succeed. In the words of my leader and martyred wife Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, "time, justice and the forces of history are on our side".

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made, and also to offer our condolences on the demise of the late Ms. Benazir Bhutto.

Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Abbas (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I wish you every success in your noble mission and recognize your long experience in international political affairs. I also extend our greetings and thanks to former President, His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, whose positions and active efforts reflected the spirit and principles of this international organization, which is headed by His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whom I also salute. I express our appreciation for everything he has done personally and through the organs and agencies of the United Nations, notably the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to assist the Palestinian people and defend their rights.

During this session we have a full agenda before us. The peoples of the whole world are looking to this body to determine what can be done to save our planet from the effects of climate change and global warming and to address the world financial crisis. Many countries, including small and developing countries, see the need to reform the United Nations, including the Security Council, so as to reflect the reality of the current international situation and to ensure more comprehensive representation of the international community.

These common concerns must not overshadow the fact that serious problems face the Middle East region in particular, first and foremost the lack of commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and the extent to which the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council are actually being implemented without the application of double standards. Everyone agrees on the need to achieve peace in the Middle East, to counter extremism and violence, and to establish the region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Yet the larger wound and deeper tragedy remains the suffering of our Palestinian people since the Nakba — the catastrophe — more than 60 years ago, to which the United Nations is a living witness. Its archives contain not dozens but hundreds of resolutions that have not been implemented.

The suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of Israel's settler occupation is crystal clear to the world. Since the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem, in 1967, Israel has continued with its settlement policy on all Palestinian land, especially in holy Jerusalem, where that policy is being accelerated and escalated by many means, including the seizure of the homes of Palestinians in the city, the imposition of restrictions, even preventing Palestinians from building and sometimes from repairing their homes while new settlement neighbourhoods are established. Jerusalem is becoming completely isolated from its surroundings because of the illegal settlements and the apartheid wall.

We now face a unique situation. If international law stipulates the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the territory of others by force, how can we then deal with the current situation where Israeli settlement policies are undermining the goal of establishing a geographically contiguous Palestinian State in implementation of the will of the international consensus? That consensus is reflected in the many resolutions and principles, including the Road Map, which we all agreed upon and which is based on the

principle of land for peace and on an end to the occupation that began in 1967.

Immense efforts have been exerted and many conferences have been held over the years, particularly since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Yet all of this has not led to an end to the conflict. President Barack Obama gave much hope to our people and the peoples of the region when he announced his vision for a peace agreement on the basis of a two-State solution and the cessation of all settlement activities. We welcomed the active American diplomacy to revive the peace process and all efforts of the international Quartet and its members: the United Nations, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United States.

All these active efforts and initiatives, which have been welcomed and supported by us and by the Arab States, are however confronted by the intransigence of Israel, which refuses to adhere to the requirements for relaunching the peace process. How is it conceivable that negotiations can be held on the borders and on Jerusalem while Israeli bulldozers are working to change the reality on the ground with the aim of creating a new reality and imposing the borders that Israel desires? How can one conceive of holding negotiations without agreement on the terms of reference and the objective of those negotiations, which the whole world has unanimously agreed upon, namely ending the Israeli occupation of the territories occupied in 1967, establishing the State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, reaching a just and agreed upon solution to the question of Palestinian refugees on the basis of resolution 194 (III) of 1948, and achieving peace on all the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese tracks, as affirmed in the Arab Peace Initiative, which provides a precious opportunity that must be seized to achieve peace?

In this regard, I should like to express our deep appreciation of the important speech delivered to the Assembly by President Obama two days ago (see A/64/PV.3), in which he affirmed the necessity of ending the occupation that began in 1967 and the illegitimacy of the settlements. He also stressed the need to establish an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State and to address all the final-status issues in the negotiations, foremost among these Jerusalem, refugees, borders, water and settlements, along with others. We reiterate that adherence to these principles, in addition to a complete freeze on all settlement activities, can salvage the peace process and open horizons for its success.

I reaffirm the eagerness of the Palestine Liberation Organization to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. At the same time, I caution that the settlement policy and the building of the separation wall, which continue to be pursued by the Israeli occupation, will abort opportunities to relaunch the peace process. Time is running out and the risks are becoming greater as a result of the continued suffering of the Palestinian people under the last remaining occupation in the world.

We call upon the international community to uphold international law and international legitimacy and to exert pressure on Israel to cease its settlement activities, to comply with the agreements it has signed, to cease its policies of occupation and colonial settlement, to release the approximately 11,000 prisoners and detainees and to lift the unjust siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, which was subjected months ago to devastating aggression claiming thousands of civilian casualties among and causing unprecedented destruction of infrastructure and public facilities, including hospitals, mosques, schools and even United Nations facilities.

Our people, which continues to demand its rights and to be determined to remain in its homeland despite all of the suffering caused by the detentions, the blockade and the killings, is also keen to end internal division and to restore national unity. Our sister, Egypt, is making commendable efforts to achieve that goal.

In spite of all our suffering from the occupation and its practices, we continue to work to build and develop our national institutions. We have made significant progress in this regard both in upholding the rule of law and public order and in promoting economic and social development, despite the harsh conditions of the occupation and the blockade. We continue to make every possible effort for the success of the efforts of our brothers in Egypt to end the ongoing coup in the Gaza Strip and to restore our national unity by resorting to the ballot box and holding presidential and legislative elections on their constitutional date under the supervision and control of Arab and Islamic countries, the United Nations and the

international community. In that way, democracy will be firmly institutionalized in our political life.

Hope will remain alive in our souls and we will not despair of regaining our rights on the basis of relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the historic role of which we reaffirm for attaining peace and upholding the principle of "might for right" and not "right for might".

From this rostrum, I conclude by reaffirming our commitment to the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and to all terms of reference of the political process. We call upon all parties to respect and abide by them to provide the opportunity to launch a successful and effective peace process. We are confident that all our brothers in sisterly Arab countries will adhere to the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for safeguarding our rights and opening the way towards genuine peaceful relations with Israel once the occupation is ended and the independent State of Palestine is established.

Address by The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda): On behalf of my Government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly and wish you every success during your tenure. I also extend heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his visionary and inspiring leadership over the past year.

> "We are all members of one body. The welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together. Industry cannot flourish if labour languish. Transportation cannot prosper if manufactures decline. The general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act, but it is well to remember that the benefit of one is the benefit of all, and the neglect of one is the neglect of all."

Those words are taken from a 1914 speech by Calvin Coolidge. However, as we gather as a community of nations almost a century later, they are just as timely. Our common humanity is being tested by the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Additional challenges that currently confront us include the increased incidence and impact of pandemic diseases, worsening poverty and hunger that trap millions around the globe, the adverse consequences of climate change, tensions over peace and security, and increasing environmental degradation. When history is recorded, our success as leaders will be determined by our stewardship during these turbulent times.

Years ago in much warmer and gentler climes, small island nations like our twin island nation of Antigua and Barbuda convened a global conference entitled "Small Islands, Big Issues". Today, we remain small islands, but the issues with which we grapple are gargantuan. In many cases, they have been exacerbated by ill-conceived or ineffective interventions and structures. None among us is immune to the financial insecurity brought about by global banking mismanagement and fraud. At the same time, global climate change threatens to overwhelm the very fabric of our small nations.

It has been said that the rising tide of globalization floats all boats on a sea of economic opportunities. What is now clear is that such tides can turn into an economic tsunami that, in one swift wave, can wash away development gains that took decades to be realized. That is the situation in which Antigua and Barbuda now finds itself. An unwelcome visitor in the form of this global economic crisis has thrust itself upon our pristine shores and is threatening to wreak untold damage on our economies.

Thus, while some members of our community of nations have begun to tout faint but hopeful signs of recovery, prudence dictates that we pay heed to the words of Calvin Coolidge and acknowledge that it simply is not an option to adopt an insular approach in responding to this global crisis. The stronger

economies must remain ever cognizant of the fact that the welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together.

In responding to the crisis, all parties must admit that the old methodologies, as reflected in the Washington Consensus and similar models, are obsolete. As we actively pursue the creation of new structures and strategies, Antigua and Barbuda encourages the community of nations to explore alternative models, such as that represented by the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). With its foundation principles of complementarity as an alternative to competition, solidarity as opposed to domination, cooperation as a replacement for exploitation, and respect for sovereignty rather than corporate rule, ALBA represents an innovative and viable model of integration and development.

Antigua and Barbuda, along with many of our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) brothers and sisters, welcomes the paradigm shift that now characterizes engagement with agencies such as the International Monetary Fund. The decision to limit conditionalities to those critical to achieving the objectives of the country programme being supported, and the commitment to play a more supportive role and allow the objectives to be set by the borrowing country are welcome responses to earlier calls to recognize the absolute necessity of using factors other than per capita gross domestic product as a criteria to access concessionary financing. We maintain that therein lies the key to mitigating a downward spiral into economic and social chaos.

Decision-making on issues of international financial governance remains a privilege of the few when such decisions have great impact on the lives, livelihood and basic well-being of millions of people the world over. My Government calls on the developed countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to ensure that their response strategies involve better international cooperation on tax issues through inclusive and cooperative frameworks that ensure the involvement and equal treatment of small jurisdictions, as stipulated in the Outcome Document (resolution 63/303) of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. The Outcome Document is a welcome one, and I applaud the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session for giving voice to the G-192, including the developing and most vulnerable countries.

The genesis of the crisis lies in the capitals of the developed world, but its effects are global and the response must be truly global. In this regard, I urge the Assembly, through the ad hoc working group to follow up on the outcome of the Conference, to take an inclusive approach to allow for the participation of those that are not members of the exclusive Group of Eight and Group of Twenty clubs.

Again, drawing on the words of Coolidge, I point out that the general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act or, I would add, by any single, small subset of the community of nations seeking unilaterally to reshape the global economic and financial architecture. It is in our power to change the operating principles of global capitalism such that economic prosperity is shared equally among countries and within countries. Drastic change is needed, in theory and practice, in economic assumptions and in the institutions of governance. It is the sustainable path to development and a challenge to which this assembly of nations and leaders must rise.

Meeting transnational and global threats and challenges to development requires international cooperation. As previously stated, traditional Western-based modalities of development cooperation in which partners are not considered equals have failed us. A paradigm shift is not an option; it is an imperative. My Government firmly believes in promoting partnerships in support of sustainable development based on principles of mutual respect and understanding, equality and a genuine desire to effect the social and economic development of all.

I have already alluded to my country's membership in ALBA and commended that innovative model of integration and development. Antigua and Barbuda also looks forward to fully playing its role in ensuring that the various trade arrangements entered into with the European Union, the United States of America and Canada work in the interest of all our nations. My Government, however, will continue to place a strong emphasis on the development components, which should be central to ensuring that these arrangements produce positive results for our people.

At the same time, we have deepened our integration efforts with our CARICOM brothers and

sisters, focusing on fully implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy as well as deepening the various subregional regulatory frameworks. As a part of the smaller Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) grouping, Antigua and Barbuda fully supports the establishment of an OECS economic union in an effort to build on the shared tradition of our subregional integration arrangements and to expand the areas of shared sovereignty in order to survive and ultimately thrive.

As a member of the CARICOM family, Antigua and Barbuda is proud of its long-standing relationship with the Republic of Cuba. It is my Government's firm belief that the discriminatory and punitive policies and practices that serve to prevent Cuba from exercising its right freely to participate in the affairs of the hemisphere must be discontinued and with immediate effect. While the winds of change continue to move across the United States of America, I call on the Obama Administration to effect change in its dealings with our sister nation of the Republic of Cuba. I call on the United States of America to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on our brothers and sisters in Cuba. As a world leader and defender of justice, the United States of America must embrace change fully in the interests of the men, women and children of Cuba.

It is worth reiterating that the parallels between the global economic crisis and the global climate change crisis are both stark and dire for small island developing States. Again, we are faced with the adverse impacts of a crisis that is not of our making but which is threatening — quite literally in the case of some of our sister nations in the Pacific — to wipe us off the face of the Earth. It is a recognized fact, but it is worth repeating, that small island States contribute the least to the causes of climate change, yet we suffer the most from its effects.

At the summit of the Alliance of Small Island States held earlier this week, my country joined with other island States in sending a strong message to the international community on the need for bold and ambitious actions. Small island States have expressed their profound disappointment at the lack of tangible action within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations to protect small island developing States and other vulnerable countries, their peoples, culture, land and ecosystems.

The responsibility for mitigating climate change is a common responsibility of all nations, be they developed or developing. However, developed countries should shoulder their moral, ethical and historical responsibilities for emitting high levels of anthropogenic greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is those actions that have now put the planet in jeopardy and compromised the well-being of present and future generations. Antigua and Barbuda therefore fully supports our sister nation of the People's Republic of China in its call for developed countries to take up their responsibility to provide new, additional, adequate and predictable financial support to developing countries, which, in effect, represents a joint investment in the future of humankind.

At this pivotal point of the climate change negotiations that will culminate in December, Antigua and Barbuda also anxiously awaits an international agreement significantly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A small island nation like ours, which is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including sea-level rise, coral bleaching and more frequent and intense hurricanes, understands that our fate, our very existence, hangs on the outcome of such an agreement. We wait with bated breath and hope that humanity will show itself worthy of this planet and that nations will have the political will and integrity of leadership to solve the most confounding challenge of our era.

The effects of climate change have forcibly brought home the absolute necessity of better disaster preparedness management and risk reduction. That has been clearly illustrated by several very active hurricane seasons in recent history. Cognizant of this, my Government has upgraded our disaster management capabilities, including strengthening the national disaster office, constructing hurricane shelters and enhancing community resilience. In the spirit of cooperation and solidarity, we look forward to having our development partners make available the necessary resources to enable us to implement our national adaptation plans and programmes. By so doing, they will help to address the adverse effects of climate change that we, the most vulnerable countries, are already experiencing. We urge them to view this as a top-most priority and moral imperative.

Gender equality and women's empowerment remain centrepieces of the national development strategy of Antigua and Barbuda. Having achieved

universal primary education, we are proud that our young males and females continue to enjoy equal access and opportunity to education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Further, with a growing number of female parliamentarians and key high-level political positions occupied by women, we continue to improve on our record of female empowerment. The advocacy work of the United Nations system on gender issues has been instrumental in the progress we have made thus far, and we look forward to continuing support as we continue to break down the traditional barriers to the active participation of more than 50 per cent of our country's human capital.

Transnational crime has burdened our societies with social and financial costs that we cannot afford to bear. Crime prevention and small arms control are priorities for my Government. Our geography has placed us at a major trans-shipment point for transnational organized crime networks trafficking in arms and narcotics.

In recent years, the level of gun violence and gun-related crime has escalated significantly, placing further pressure on an already fragile economy. This has led to insecurity, fear and loss of life in our societies, hampering our development efforts and threatening the general peace and stability of the region. We need greater cooperation from countries, as well as the support of the United Nations system, to eliminate this threat to hemispheric and international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda is in full support of a legally binding arms trade treaty that will prevent the illegal international transfer of arms and will govern the trade in conventional arms according to common international standards.

As a peace-loving nation, Antigua and Barbuda is also concerned by the lack of progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We remain steadfast in our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. The threat posed by non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction is shared by all countries, large and small. For this reason we support the extension of the mandate of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Pursuant to our obligations under that resolution we are pleased to have submitted the relevant reports to the respective Security Council committees.

The trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the waters of the Caribbean also remains a critical issue. The risk of an accident or a terrorist attack on one of these shipments poses a grave threat to the environmental and economic sustainability of the region. Heads of Government of CARICOM and of the wider Association of Caribbean States have consistently called for a total cessation of these shipments in our waters, and we reiterate our strenuous and forceful rejection of the continued use of the Caribbean Sea for the trans-shipment of nuclear and other hazardous waste material.

Finally, as Caribbean people of African descent, our past is clouded by the dark days of the transatlantic slave trade. However, with steady hands, committed minds and innovative plans, a bright future looms with the sunrise. We must ensure that we develop programmes to educate and inculcate in future generations an understanding of the lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade. We must not forget. We must encourage continued action in this regard. Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to the erection of a permanent memorial to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, an initiative being championed by CARICOM. We look forward also to the continuation of serious dialogue and eventual consensus on the issue of reparations.

In conclusion, it is very clear that the multiple and multifaceted nature of the global threats and challenges we face will test the abilities of this assembly of nations and its leaders. Is the United Nations up to the task? Will we, both individually and collectively, heed the admonition of Calvin Coolidge and demonstrate in both word and deed a firm conviction that the welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together? For us, a small island with big aspirations and dreams for the future of our people, we remain hopeful that we will all find the political will and the ability to rise to the task.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure, Sir, to convey to you on behalf of the State of Kuwait and on my own account our most sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Undoubtedly, your long regional and international experience will be an important asset in achieving the success we desire in the work of this important session of the General Assembly. I also wish to pay tribute to the presidency of your predecessor, His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, during the sixty-third session.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I cannot fail to express also our appreciation for the efforts and good offices of His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and of the entire Secretariat staff. We thank them for all their efforts in the service of peace and security and in improving the performance and the programmes of United Nations bodies with a view to enhancing and developing their capacities to keep pace with new developments on the international scene and to respond effectively to the challenges and dangers of today's world.

Never before has the world been in such need of a strong, effective global organization. The diversity and complexity of the challenges, crises and new developments which confront our world today, in addition to regional and international questions that have remained unresolved for a long time, require Member States to shoulder their responsibilities in supporting this Organization, providing it with the financial resources it needs to perform its duties and discharge its responsibilities effectively and with innovative methodology. Also, the United Nations itself has a responsibility to improve its own administrative structure and its performance in the field, and to enhance its capacity to detect and monitor developing challenges. This must be commensurate with the current dangers, which require bold initiatives, quick action and effective treatment.

Combating terrorism; eradicating poverty and hunger; combating dangerous diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and the A (H1N1) influenza virus, which of late has spread in a frightful manner all over the world; and dealing with the spread of the scourge of illegal drugs: these are all challenges that require from our Organization innovative joint action that recognizes the dangers, diagnoses the crises, prepares the resources and intervenes effectively in a radical and collective fashion. Also, mobilizing specialized regional organizations to act in a concerted and organized effort is an important element in addressing these challenges.

Moreover, there are other challenges and threats from which the international community still suffers, the most prominent being the financial and economic crisis and the phenomenon of climate change. The financial crisis has had a negative impact on the economies of the developing countries and has impeded their efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This has resulted in the emergence of economic and social problems such as a high rate of unemployment, deceleration in the rate of economic growth, the collapse of financial markets and an obvious contraction in regional and world trade.

In this regard, we welcome the Outcome Document adopted by the high-level meeting convened by the President of the General Assembly last June (see resolution 63/303), where commitments were made to help developing countries overcome the effects of the financial crisis, through an increase in official development assistance, and to improve the international trade system. It also emphasized the need to continue the reform of the international financial institutions to ensure equitable representation on their executive boards and to enhance their oversight role, as well as to improve the conditions for providing financial and technical assistance for the developing and least developed countries.

That effort, along with joint arrangements, led to the emergence of signs of global economic recovery during the last few weeks. It is our hope that such action will continue in order to address a no less dangerous crisis, that of climate change and the degradation of the environment. This problem requires an urgent global response. In this regard, we look forward to the success of the important Climate Change Conference, to be held in December in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Kuwait will be honoured to host in mid-December their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, at their thirtieth Summit Conference, where they will have a full agenda. Foremost of the many issues before them will be a project of vital importance: the electric grid linking their States. We hope that this strategic step will be the first of many, including the monetary unification project and the issuance of a unified Gulf currency.

The State of Kuwait is proud to top the list of Arab States, and to hold thirty-third position overall, in human development. As indicated in the Arab Human Development Report 2009, "Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries", issued by the United Nations Development Programme, Kuwait scored the highest marks among the Arab States in the fields of education, health and general freedoms. Let there be no doubt that the Government of Kuwait will continue its efforts to improve economic and social conditions, and to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals even before the target date, which will provide a better life for its citizens and residents.

Kuwait is proud, too, that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, located in Vienna, has listed Kuwait as first among Arab States, and third globally, in combating illegal drugs and drug trafficking. That was possible only through a focused national effort and broad regional cooperation, which achieved outstanding results.

The State of Kuwait will continue steadily to meet all its financial commitments to international and regional institutes, funds and programmes in the field of development assistance as well as to support infrastructure projects in the developing and least developed countries. Kuwait will also continue to contribute to development projects through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which since its establishment in 1961 has provided assistance amounting to more than $14.5 billion to more than a hundred countries.

The State of Kuwait has also taken initiatives to stimulate economic growth, raise living standards and reduce poverty in States suffering from the increase in prices of basic food commodities. For this purpose, Kuwait has established the Decent Living Fund, with $100 million capital, and has allocated $300 million to fight poverty in Africa through the Islamic Development Bank.

Although Kuwait is a developing country, the percentage of humanitarian development aid that it provides exceeds the target adopted at international conferences, reaching 1.31 per cent of its gross national product, compared with 0.45 per cent of the gross national product of States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Based on the State of Kuwait's realization of the importance of economic cooperation and trade in consolidating relations between States, His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, convened the first Arab Economic Summit, focusing on development, which Kuwait hosted last January. The Conference adopted a number of important and ambitious economic projects aimed at reaching new horizons of partnership and cooperation. Also adopted was the proposal by the State of Kuwait to establish a $1 billion fund, to which we will contribute $500 million, to support and finance small and medium-size development projects, which will help raise the standards of living of Arab citizens.

The June parliamentary elections in my country represented a qualitative transformation in Kuwaiti parliamentary life, with four women obtaining the trust and support of the Kuwaiti voters. They now join their brothers in representing the Kuwaiti people and expressing their ambitions under the dome of the National Assembly. This civilized accomplishment comes after Kuwaiti women have achieved success in the fields of private and public enterprise, as well as government work, including holding ministerial positions in the Kuwaiti Cabinet. We express our pride in, and appreciation of, the significant achievements of Kuwaiti women and will continue to support their role as active partners in the political, economic and social fields.

We express much sorrow and pain that the question of Palestine has remained unresolved for over six decades, despite numerous international efforts and initiatives by a number of international and regional parties. A source of major concern is the deteriorating political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, as a result of the continued exercise by Israel, the occupying Power, of its illegal policies and practices, contrary to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

In this regard, we renew our condemnation of repeated Israeli aggression against the occupied territories, in particular, the military aggression against Gaza last December, in which more than 1,400 Palestinians, among them women, children and the elderly, were killed. That aggression also resulted in the unjustifiable destruction of homes, property and civilian infrastructure.

We call upon the international community, the Security Council in particular, to assume its responsibilities and take all necessary measures to stop Israel's violation of international humanitarian law and its settlement activities as well as the policy of collective punishment it imposes on the Palestinian people. That policy is applied through its blockade of Gaza and its restriction of the freedom of access and movement of persons in all areas, including in the occupied territories. We also call for an immediate halt to Israel's settlement activities, which are carried out under unacceptable pretexts.

The State of Kuwait also wishes to refer to the report (A/HRC/12/48) of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, which clearly proves that the Israeli forces committed war crimes during the brutal aggression against Gaza last year. This represents a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Security Council and the broader United Nations to assume their responsibility to stop these crimes against humanity and to punish the perpetrators in accordance with international law.

Because of its moral and national responsibilities, as well as its steady support for the Palestinian cause, the State of Kuwait, in addition to supporting international efforts to improve living conditions in Gaza and to rebuild what the Israeli aggression against Gaza destroyed, has voluntarily pledged to donate $500 million, $200 million of which is to rebuild Gaza. This is a portion of its commitments within the context of the League of Arab States to support the Palestinian Authority.

Kuwait also took the initiative of responding to the appeal that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) launched last December by donating the entire amount sought, $34 million, to cover the cost of urgently needed relief aid.

In this context, we believe that the suffering of the Palestinian people will continue until there is a permanent, just and comprehensive peace, which must mean ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the establishment of a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and total Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories it has occupied since 4 June 1967, in implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

As for Iraq, the State of Kuwait commends the speedy efforts of the Iraqi Government to achieve peace, security, stability and prosperity for the Iraqi people. Kuwait supports every action that will preserve the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of brotherly Iraq and ensure non-interference in its internal affairs. The State of Kuwait also condemns all acts of terrorism in Iraq aimed at destabilizing its security and stability and instigating detestable violent sectarianism.

To put an end to the so-called sectarian violence, it is important to resume the policy of dialogue and national reconciliation in order to ensure ample participation by all sectors of society in all phases of the political process, including the parliamentary elections to be held next January. The State of Kuwait will continue to support every effort to assist brotherly Iraq to regain its standing and natural position in its regional and international environment, in order to build a democratic, unified and peaceful Iraq, living in peace internally and with its neighbours, committed to fulfil its obligations as laid down in resolutions of international legitimacy.

The State of Kuwait hopes that the conflict over the occupied United Arab Emirates islands will be resolved by peaceful means. It calls upon the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran to settle the question through

direct brotherly negotiations or by recourse to the International Court of Justice.

The resolution of conflicts and the settlement of differences between States, particularly in our region, must depend on a set of firm principles, deeply rooted in international relations, and emanating from resolutions of international legitimacy and the rules of international law. If necessary, a decision of the International Court of Justice must be sought to preserve good-neighbourly relations. That basis and those legal principles cannot be sidestepped to achieve the self-interests of one side at the expense of the other. In no case would that serve good-neighbourly relations or the building of mutual trust, and therefore it would affect the peace and stability of the parties, as well as international peace and security.

We followed with great interest yesterday's Security Council summit (see S/PV.6191) addressing one of the most important matters affecting international peace and security, nuclear disarmament, in order to create a world free of nuclear weapons. We noted with satisfaction the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1887 (2009), which sets the stage for a world free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, a world that fulfils the hopes of humanity and ensures the safety and prosperity of the world's peoples.

While Kuwait supports the right of all States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it reiterates its deep-rooted belief in the important need for disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction and for declaring the Middle East region a zone free from nuclear weapons. We renew our call to deal seriously with Israel, the only country in the region that did not adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and call upon Israel to adhere to the Treaty and subject all its facilities to comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

Kuwait also hopes that negotiations between the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran, the IAEA and other countries concerned will continue, with a view to reaching a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in order to dispel the fears and doubts surrounding the nature and purpose of its programme.

In conclusion, it is our hope that joint political will can be mustered to achieve the noble purposes and principles of the Charter and to confront the serious challenges facing our world today.

There is also an urgent need to redouble our efforts to reject fanaticism and xenophobia, and to continue strengthening the dialogue between different civilizations and religions as the ideal mode for achieving understanding between cultures. This will create an appropriate environment to consolidate the principle of mutual respect and build bridges between societies.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius): On behalf of my delegation, and in my own name, I extend to the President our warmest congratulations on his well-deserved election to preside over the sixty-fourth session of the Assembly. I also commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts at the helm of our Organization in the cause of international peace and security.

In this globalized world, nations will increasingly face unconventional, emerging threats to their security. The recent rapid spread of the A (H1N1) virus is a case in point. The commitment of the entire membership of our Organization is required to forge a consensus to deal with the uncertainties of the times ahead. More than ever before, multilateralism will be the way forward.

As we confronted the severe food and energy crises of a year ago, little did we realize that the world was about to be engulfed in an unprecedented economic crisis. The most severe meltdown since the Great Depression has spared no country, precisely because we live in an interconnected world. Millions of people all over the world have lost their jobs, their incomes and their savings. It is estimated that an additional 50 million people have already been driven into extreme poverty. Whatever modest progress developing countries had achieved has been severely set back.

The world may be witnessing the early signs of a slow recovery. However, the aftershocks of the crisis will continue to be felt for much longer. Developing countries have experienced declining capital flows, stagnating foreign aid and a fall in remittances and export revenues.

Mauritius, with a small open economy, has been exceptionally exposed to the adverse effects of the crisis. Although both our manufacturing sector and our tourism industry have been negatively impacted, we have registered positive economic growth. This is due to the reforms my Government has implemented since 2005. Bold reforms have succeeded in making our economy more resilient. In 2008, our gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.3 per cent and the unemployment rate dropped to 7.2 per cent. Mauritius attracted foreign direct investment amounting to almost 5 per cent of GDP, and achieved the highest level of job creation in more than a decade.

However, the global crisis has been a severe blow. Growth has been slowed; we expect growth of around 2.7 per cent this year. But our economy is now structurally more sound, more competitive and resilient. We are concerned that a prolonged crisis could drive our export-oriented economy into reverse gear, with further declines in trade and capital flows, exchange rate volatility, and further falls in tourist arrivals.

To mitigate the damage to our economy, we reacted as soon as the first signs of the subprime crisis started in the United States. We introduced an expansionary budget with emphasis on infrastructural projects, and as the crisis spread into a worldwide financial and economic crisis we put in place a stimulus package to save jobs, protect people and prepare for the recovery. We have, in other words, been ahead of the curve. In this uncertain economic situation, the priority of Mauritius is to safeguard the hard-earned gains from past reforms.

We have been collateral victims of financial imbalances, over-leveraged financial institutions, inadequate regulation and deficient supervision. Developing countries benefit little from periods of boom, and pay an inordinately high price for the busts that often follow. We hope that strengthening regulations and supervision will prevent the accumulation of high-risk, toxic assets that led to the crisis in the first place.

The crisis has also made it clear that the Bretton Woods institutions stand in need of fundamental reform. However, reforms will be effective only if they take into account the long-term stability and sustainability of the global economy. Institutions that make global decisions must reflect the changing nature of the global economic environment.

For too long we have condoned a clear democratic deficit in global economic governance. We need to reshape the global economy into a more equitable system, responsive to the needs of all countries and reflecting the realities of the day. In this regard, we appreciate the convening of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, held last June. The Conference provided a uniquely inclusive platform to address the urgent concerns of all nations. It has allowed the formulation of proposals to lessen the impact of the crisis, especially on vulnerable populations.

The implementation of the Conference's recommendations should avoid a further deterioration in the conditions of the world's poor. And we look forward to the recommendations of the Group of 20 (G20) Summit, which starts today in Pittsburgh.

In coping with the effects of the crisis, we have to resist the temptation to resort to trade protectionism. We should not forget that international trade has been a powerful engine for development and has generated substantial economic growth. From our perspective as a vulnerable small island developing State, it is vital that markets remain open and that international trade flows are not impeded.

It is essential that the Doha Round, with development at its core, be successfully concluded,

without, however, any unravelling of the July 2008 convergence package. We look forward to significant progress at the seventh session of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, scheduled for December in Geneva.

The negative impact of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable populations causes us great concern. The global economic slowdown has further delayed the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Confronted with this grave setback, the developing world looks for a strong demonstration of solidarity.

We hope that the donor community will do more than just honour its previous commitments. The Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development have been overtaken by the events of the past year.

But I strongly believe that what we need now is a change in our approach in the developing economies. We need to urgently apply ourselves to making pro-business policy reforms instead of just relying on aid. That is the way to create wealth and prosperity. Charity is a noble endeavour, but relying on charity alone is not the answer to future prosperity and opportunity for all.

We need to unleash the entrepreneurial drive of our people. That is the ultimate answer to the eradication of poverty. We all know that it is better to show a man how to fish than to give him a fish every day. And we need to coordinate our actions to bring down trade barriers. In fact, what the developing countries need is a Marshall Plan, with a single coordinated programme. To qualify, countries need to meet benchmarks for good governance, respect for human rights, accessible health care and education and predictable economic policies.

Such a plan was successful in uplifting the economies of Europe after the Second World War. I have no doubt that it can be adapted to meet the same measure of success for developing countries.

At the national level, my Government is mobilizing considerable resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals. In a relentless drive to fight poverty, we have introduced an eradication of absolute poverty programme, which aims to break the vicious circle of poverty begetting poverty. And, to show our commitment to eradicating poverty in our region, Mauritius took the initiative to host the Southern African Development Community (SADC) International Consultative Conference on Poverty and Development last year so that we can develop a common pragmatic approach. We are committed to the attainment of the MDGs on schedule, and look forward to the high-level review meeting next year.

Ensuring the fulfilment of the MDGs demands a stronger commitment by national Governments in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We are heartened in this instance by the response of the international community, which has been timely, generous and effective. Each and every nation must be fully engaged in this fight.

In Mauritius, we treat HIV/AIDS as a national priority. I have set up a National AIDS Committee, which I chair. We have put in place a multisectoral strategy to protect the population at large, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups. And yesterday I was delighted to learn about the breakthrough of an HIV/AIDS vaccine which could be available in the not too distant future.

Recently, the A (H1N1) pandemic has rapidly taken on alarming proportions. Although we have taken all possible steps to effectively deal with this new influenza virus, the escalation of the outbreak could stretch our health resources and infrastructure. In this connection, developing countries require early access to the vaccines that are in the pipeline, once their safety is assured.

Food security should have been an absolute priority of development strategies. It has for far too long been neglected. Many countries struggle to guarantee adequate food for their people. The present economic recession compounds an already difficult situation. Over a billion people, mostly in developing countries, do not have sufficient food to meet their daily basic nutritional needs. One in six of the human family goes to bed hungry and angry.

The present relative decline in food prices must not make us lose sight of the structural long-term deficit the world faces. This age-old problem is complicated by uncertainties linked to climate change and the diversion of food crops for bio-fuel production.

We must strengthen measures to improve food security globally. Existing funding mechanisms must

be improved to assist the World Food Programme to effectively avoid recurrent outbreaks of famine.

Mauritius welcomes the initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to convene the World Summit on Food Security in Rome in November. It is our earnest hope that it will not be just another conference, but will propose practical measures to alleviate hunger and malnutrition.

In Mauritius, we have adopted a comprehensive strategy to achieve a reasonable level of food self-sufficiency. We are mobilizing technological, financial and human resources to produce locally as much food as is practically possible. To this end, we have set up a one-billion-rupee Food Security Fund to optimize efficiency and boost agricultural production.

To benefit from economies of scale, we are encouraging production in surplus of local consumption for export. We are establishing partnerships regionally to jointly produce food crops, livestock and marine products. The effective implementation of this strategy will contribute to improving our national food security.

We are currently working with Mozambique on a rice production project which will contribute to improving food availability in both countries, and probably in the region.

Climate change poses an existential challenge to mankind. Our profligacy puts at stake the very future of our planet and the forms of life it supports. This is an environmental threat with far-reaching social and economic implications that we have yet to mainstream into our national planning and decision-making processes.

We cannot with impunity treat our home planet with contempt. We can yet forestall bringing upon ourselves the full wrath of nature. But time is running out. Divergences must be resolved at all costs, and quickly, at Copenhagen. To move forward in a pragmatic manner, we need to break away from the finger-pointing, recrimination and brinkmanship of the past.

In Copenhagen, it is imperative that we agree to a targeted reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that will restrict global temperature rise to no more than 1.5° C. But any action, to be fair, must be proportional. Those who have polluted the most should bear most of the burden. Developing countries need extra help so that their growth path is not thwarted.

We must create a financial mechanism to assist developing countries to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. This mechanism has to be credible and sustainable, and be managed according to the principles of good governance. It should also be a channel for the transfer of technology.

I therefore make a strong appeal that we unite to act collectively and quickly in our own interest and that of future generations.

For its part, Mauritius is implementing the "Maurice île durable" project to respond to climate change and the energy crisis. This is an ambitious programme focusing on the use of renewable energy and the emergence of small power producers. Its implementation will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels considerably and facilitate the transition to a clean, energy-efficient economy.

We have mobilized appropriate resources, with the collaboration of the private sector and development partners, to build a green and ecological future for Mauritius. We are doing our utmost to contribute, in full measure, to the global effort required.

The inherent constraints faced by small island developing States (SIDS) — in particular limited resources, remoteness, small domestic markets and vulnerability to natural disasters — cannot be ignored. We share a common future, and the welfare of one is unsustainable without the welfare of all.

We appeal to the international community to be more forthcoming in assisting SIDS in their efforts to become integrated into the global economy. A one-size-fits-all approach to development threatens to further marginalize SIDS in an increasingly globalized world. It is patently obvious that SIDS deserve special treatment and need to be recognized as a group of countries having specificities of their own.

The promotion and protection of human rights is a key priority of my Government. I wish to extend our appreciation to the United Nations membership for the re-election of Mauritius to the Human Rights Council. We will continue to work with other members of the Council in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and objectivity to ensure that human rights violations are effectively addressed.

In line with our commitment to see that perpetrators of grave human rights violations are brought to justice, we wish to reaffirm our unflinching support for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

At the national level, we have adopted legislation such as the Equal Opportunities Act and the Truth and Justice Commission Act to further entrench human rights. Our achievements in the field of human rights were widely acknowledged during the Universal Periodic Review conducted earlier this year by the Human Rights Council. We were gratified by the unique opportunity provided to us by the Review to make a critical self-assessment of the situation in Mauritius.

When I addressed the Assembly in September 2007 I called on the international community to do more than just stand by the people of Burma. This appeal is more than ever relevant. We cannot condone the condemnation of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi by a kangaroo court. We reaffirm our solidarity with and support for Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, an emblematic lady who personifies the courage and dignity of her people, a people battered and bruised but unbowed.

It is imperative that we convey a clear and strong signal to the military junta that the international community will not tolerate its confiscation of the Burmese people's sovereignty. In this respect, I welcome the recent decision of the EU to extend the sanctions imposed on Burma.

For its part, Mauritius will continue to implement the decision I took in 1997 to suspend importations of rice from Burma. This decision has a cost, but it is a price we are prepared to pay in defence of principles we hold dear. We must show the world that there will be no double standards in our approach. I urge those countries that give comfort and sustenance to the regime not to let their short-term, mercantile interests perpetuate the misery of this long-suffering people.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, remains an issue of deep concern not only to the region, but also to the world at large. We take heart in the efforts of the Administration of President Obama to impart new impetus to the Middle East peace process. And we could not agree more with President Obama that continuing to build new settlements flies in the face of logic if lasting peace is to be achieved.

As a long-time proponent of a two-State solution, Mauritius welcomes the Quartet's commitment, renewed in Trieste in June, to actively and vigorously work for a comprehensive solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Arab League's commitment to peace with Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative have been encouraging developments. We hope that those most directly concerned will display the courage and maturity to engage in meaningful dialogue in earnest.

The United Nations is, more than ever, the ultimate guardian of mankind's aspiration to global peace and security. I salute its unceasing effort in resolving conflicts around the world, in particular on the African continent. Conflicts and insecurity in Africa have been a major cause of the continent's underdevelopment. A study carried out by Oxfam last year indicates that between 1990 and 2005 conflict cost the continent $300 billion, which is almost equivalent to all the international aid received by sub-Saharan Africa during that period.

The African Union has moved ahead with the creation of an African Standby Force. Once fully established, the Force will, hopefully, help in the advancement of peace and security at the continental level. The creation of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is also a positive step in improving the peace and security architecture of Africa.

I take this opportunity to commend the United Nations and the European Union for helping Africa enhance its capacity to respond adequately and in a timely manner to security threats on the continent. The European Union deserves our appreciation for its contribution, to the tune of €500 million under the 10th European Development Fund, for the implementation of the Africa Peace Facility.

Allow me also to highlight some of the progress that has been achieved on the continent this year, including the formation of an all-inclusive Government in Zimbabwe and the holding of presidential elections in Mauritania.

We welcome the Agreement of Goodwill and Confidence-Building for the Settlement of the Problem in Darfur reached in February by Sudan's Government of National Unity and the Justice and Equality Movement.

We commend the role played by the African Union-United Nations joint mediation team and particularly the Government of Qatar, which has done so much to drive the process. We call on all the parties to the conflict to join in the search for peace in Darfur. We hope that conditions will speedily be created for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

We have high expectations that the preliminary agreement reached in Maputo will provide the political framework for resolution of the troubled situation in Madagascar. We are heartened by the active involvement and solicitude of various international bodies in trying to return the country to constitutional order. We cannot and should not condone unconstitutional Governments anywhere, be it in Honduras or Madagascar.

Somalia reminds us that we cannot with impunity wash our hands of any country, however remote it may be or however unimportant it may seem. The international community's neglect of the country and its indifference to the suffering of the Somali people have resulted in a quintessential failed State. That neglect and indifference have come back to haunt us in the form of piracy. Armed bands led by warlords have filled the political vacuum left by the deliquescence of the Somali State. Today the territory of Somalia provides not only a haven for pirates, but also a base for terrorist groups. The Transitional Federal Government has to be assisted to regain control of the country, to put an end to the suffering of the Somali people and to deal with the problem of piracy.

Terrorism is an insidious, tentacular malignancy — a bane of our times. It is not only a security threat. It is a moral challenge, the negation of the fundamental values of civilization: the sanctity of human life and the intrinsic worth of the human person.

Every terrorist attack causes us pain, anguish and revulsion. But the one in Mumbai last November took on a special poignancy for the people of Mauritius. In the blind and mindless carnage unleashed by the terrorists on that city, one of the victims was a compatriot of ours. We have condemned in no uncertain terms this dastardly, cowardly act, and we expect that everything will be done to ensure that the terrorist organization behind it is brought to justice. My Government unreservedly supports all campaigns and initiatives against terrorism.

Mauritius nurtures the hope of the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons one day. Pending its ultimate realization, we support all measures aimed at halting the further spread of such weapons. In this regard, we welcome the comprehensive agenda of President Obama to achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Multilateralism is the cornerstone of the United Nations, and should be strengthened in the face of the current global challenges. Global challenges need a global response.

We follow with keen interest the process under way to revitalize the General Assembly and improve its working methods, to bring more coherence to the United Nation system, and to reform the Security Council.

We are particularly satisfied by the start of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform earlier this year in an informal plenary session of the General Assembly. The comity of nations should work together, in a spirit of solidarity, to reach a unified position on the reform of this important body. The reform of the Council should cover the categories of both permanent and non-permanent members, with a revised set of working methods.

We fully support India's having a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council. And we once again express our unequivocal support for the Common African Position. We also support permanent membership of a Latin American and Caribbean country in a reformed Security Council.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, which was detached by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to our independence. The dismemberment of the territory of Mauritius was in total disregard of General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965.

As President Obama said two days ago from this very rostrum, we must "demonstrate that international law is not an empty promise" (*A/64/PV.3*). We must all abide by it.

We have consistently urged the United Kingdom to engage in a meaningful dialogue with Mauritius for the early return of the Chagos Archipelago. We are pleased to inform the Assembly that two rounds of

talks have been held with the United Kingdom this year. We look forward to those discussions coming to fruition, and hope that Mauritius will be able to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, in the near future.

My Government and the French authorities are also in the process of addressing the issue of Tromelin. We are discussing the modalities of co-management of the island in a spirit of friendship and trust, pending the settlement of the sovereignty issue, which has to be resolved and not left on the back burner.

(*spoke in French*)

Nobody can deny the key role that the United Nations is called upon to play in the concert of nations. At the same time, we agree that the Organization needs to be reformed. The attendance at this session of the Assembly, where each year a number of points of view and perceptions converge, emphasizes our desire to act and build together.

The concerns and aspirations of our peoples are echoed and thus take on universal resonance. We are indeed becoming aware that, whatever latitude we develop in, we have a common destiny.

I am one of a people steeped in several cultures, whose men and women worship Shiva, Jesus, Allah and Buddha, in diverse languages. The history of the populating of our island and its geographical position have made our country a true crossroads of cultures. We have made the right to difference on the one hand and the right to equality on the other our watchwords. I am happy to remind my multi-ethnic people that each individual shares with all other humans 99.9 per cent of the same genetic code.

Those of us gathered here have much to learn from each other. Exchanging our experiences and knowledge enriches us and makes us stronger.

The respect for plurality that this forum demands must neither make us forget our differences nor contribute to the emergence of a dominant discourse.

I commend the topic that the President has chosen for this year. If the Assembly manages to foster cross-pollenization of cultures and to highlight what human beings have in common, we shall, to a large extent, have achieved our goal.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 2.10 p.m.